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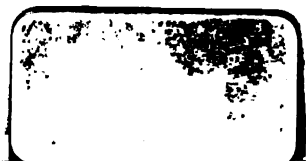
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THE LAST BALL;

AND

OTHER TALES,

BY GEORGE SOANE, ESQ., B.A.,

AUTHOR OF "PROLOGS OF PUCK," "INNKEEPER'S DAUGHTER," ETC.

"If thou be a severe, sour-complexioned man, then I here
disallow thee to be a competent judge."



IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
EDWARD CHURTON, 26, HOLLES STREET.

1843.

J. BENSLEY, PRINTER, WOKING.

TO
HIS GRACE THE DUKE OF BEAUFORT, K.G. ;

&c., &c., &c.,

THE GENEROUS AND ENLIGHTENED PATRON

OF

Literature, Arts, and Science,

THESE VOLUMES

ARE RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED,

BY HIS GRATEFUL AND DEVOTED SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.

THE LAST BALL.

CHAPTER I.

“And whither with you now? what loose action are you bound for? what comrades are you to meet withal? where’s the supper? where’s the rendezvous?”

EASTWARD HOE.

IN the days of King Charles the Second, the period at which our tale commences, St. James’ Park bore a very different aspect from what it now exhibits. From its greater size, as well as from its general appearance, it had really some pretensions to the name, although still upon a

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small scale, besides being well stocked with deer of several countries, and some of them of a rare kind, white and spotted like leopards, not to speak of the more common class of animals, such as antelopes, Arabian sheep, and Guiana goats.

The beautiful piece of water, which had recently been formed by Le Nôtre, converting an unhealthy marsh into an ornament, was also stored with a variety of aquatic birds, that bred about the DECOY, although so near the city, in withy pots, or nests, built for that purpose a little above the surface of the water. It seemed as if each division of the known world had sent hither its feathered representative to amuse and astonish the good folks of London, the motley group consisting, as it did for the most part, of single specimens, the very names of which were strange not only to the multitude, but even to the better file of visitors.

Here was a melancholy water-fowl, brought by the Russian ambassador from Astracan, who would toss up the flat-fish, supplied to his table, as dexterously as any cook would turn a pancake, catching it, as it fell again, in the

gullet at his lower beak, which, being filmy, stretched to receive either plaice or flounder, though large enough to choak any throat of ordinary dimensions. Here too was another rare aquatic, not so large, but quite as gluttonous, eating as much fish for a meal as the weight of his whole body, which however did not swell or show the least bigger for the feat. Not less curious was a sort of poultry, about the size of a tame pigeon, with legs so short that their crops seemed to touch the earth, trooping in the company of a pair of Balearic cranes, one of which stumped along like a Chelsea invalid, on a wooden leg and thigh, with a joint so accurately made that he could walk and use it as well as if it had been natural. A milk-white raven, a swan, and a pelican, were also to be found in this curious assemblage; and, still more rare for the season, a stork, that was at liberty and with the free use of his wings, had he chosen to fly from his strangely-assorted companions.

Other differences there were, not less striking to the eye of the beholder, but which have left no vestiges of their having once existed. The

ground, now occupied and disfigured by Buckingham House, was then *the Mulberry Garden*, so called, most probably, from the mulberry trees that were planted about the walks and arbours, wherein the gallants used to treat their mistresses to syllabubs, and carry on intrigues, the principal, if not sole, occupation of those very loyal days. It was, indeed, the most fashionable place of refreshment about town, and "the only place," as a writer of the time satirically observes, "for persons of the best quality to be cheated at," as the old Spring Gardens had been in the previous reign, till they were shut up by the wisdom or the hypocrisy of Cromwell. In contradistinction to the latter, it was called the New Spring Gardens, and had been laid out, if not with more taste, at least with more care and attention. For the most part it was divided into squares, planted with rose-trees, and other shrubs, as well as the more delicate kinds of vegetables, such as peas, and asparagus, and surrounded by hedges of the gooseberry bush. Jonquils, gilly-flowers, and various other roots of a similar

kind, formed the borders of the walks and alleys.

A spring morning of unusual warmth and brightness had filled this favourite resort at an early hour, the better sort coming forth for the display of their velvet and feathers, and the many following in their track to admire or grumble, according as they had, or had not, the means of imitating their follies. One party in particular seemed to attract the attention, not more of the sight-loving populace than of the hangers-on of fashion, who evidently considered them as "the glass and models of the time," though some few of graver appearance eyed them with much less favorable glances. Still, whether for admiration or dislike, this little knot, sparkling with diamonds and other precious stones, was the object of general observance; and no wonder, seeing that it consisted of the accomplished Buckingham, the satiric Rochester, the witty Etherege, and the gay Sedley. But the state of the Court and times may be better inferred from their conversation than from any description.

"Now would I lay any wager," said Ethe-

rege, as Lord Buckhurst and Sir John Denham passed them in earnest conversation—"I would lay any wager they are talking of the Andalusian."

"And who, think you, would take the wager?" asked Buckingham; "since the time when this Maria de los Dolores first made her appearance amongst us—and that, I fancy, is some six months—the town has done little else but talk of her."

"Matchless constancy on the part of the town!" cried Rochester; "why the *Funamble Turk*, as that sententious booby, Evelyn, calls the tumbler, did not last half so long; and the fame of the *Hairy Woman* lived and died in as many weeks."

"Zounds!" exclaimed Sedley, "you are as dull to-day as a play of John Dryden's, or of your quondam protégé, Crown, whose head is good for nothing, that I know of, but to bear a wig in the window of a barber's shop. What on earth could put it into that satirical brain of thine to talk of "rope-dancing Turks" and "Hairy Women" in the same breath with the Andalusian, the fairest piece of work Dame

Nature ever turned out of hand? Oh, it's as impossible to paint such a beauty as it is to paint the flavour of a peach or the fragrance of a lily."

"You are right," cried Etherege, with no less enthusiasm; "quite right; that beautiful form of hers only wants a heart within it to transcend all that Waller ever wrote, or Vandyck imagined upon his canvas. 'Tis a pity that, with eyes of fire, and lips that sound a tempest of provocation, she should be as cold as Father Thames, when he's numbed by the frost, and can scarcely creep along for the ice on his back."

"In the name of Apollo and the Nine Spinners," exclaimed Rochester, "from what fustian poet have you stolen this farrago of fiery eyes and frozen hearts?—or how long is it since the Thames became a father, and found the use of his legs?"

"Ever since Rochester lost his eyes," said the Duke, "and that was when he first grew blind to the beauty of our Andalusian."

"Such lips!" cried Sedley; "red as cherries, and full as the opening rose-bud."

"But her complexion has got the Spanish tan, and that 's a dye will hardly pass muster in any court, except it be in the court of the queen of Gypsies."

"Such a foot, too!" exclaimed Etherege; "she might wear the slipper of a fairy, and it would never pinch her."

"I could say as much for a Chinese, and be as near the truth," rejoined the satirist. "D—n her, she 's as proud of her beauty as a peacock."

"Well," said Sedley, "and why not?—men are proud of titles, which are mere breath; and of wealth, which is scarcely more substantial; and why not a woman of her beauty?—surely the gifts of nature are as estimable as the gifts of fortune."

"A most undeniable philosophy!" cried the Duke; "you hear, Rochester!—you hear what the sage discourseth—but I fear me your heresy is past all hope of mending."

"Fire and faggot would not burn it out of me," replied Rochester.

"From all which," said Buckingham, "we may shrewdly guess that you have found this

beautiful bit of Spanish mahogany too cross in the grain for your purposes ; after making you dance in a fool's paradise for weeks, she has treated you like the rest of us—given you the dor at the last moment—turned round upon you with a laugh and a curtsey—and wished you a fair good-morrow."

"Even so," replied the Earl ; "a more consummate coquette never wore petticoat, or tied garter below the knee. On my soul, I wonder what she's made of—not mere mortal flesh and blood, or she had gone the way of her kind long before this ; nay, if she had even ice in her veins, instead of the warmer fluid, the Court of Charles had been a rare place to have melted it :—perhaps she's a mermaid."

"And thereby hangs a *tale*," said Etherege, laughing heartily at his own conceit, though none of the best or brightest ; "but, truly, her complexion is of your olivader—your dark olive—a tint that smacks suspiciously of salt water."

"Green or brown," said Rochester, "it's an unheard-of piece of impudence in her to pretend to chastity in these days ; it might have

done very well in the time of our great-grand-fathers, or when old Noll ruled the roast with his puritans, but, with the world as it now goes, such a pretence is a downright libel on the rest of the female community, and, as a moral man—”

“A what?” interrupted the Duke, bursting into a violent fit of laughter, in which he was no less cordially joined by his companion; “for Heaven’s love, tell me, Rochester, did you say, a moral man?—”

“A moral man,” repeated Rochester, with laudable gravity.

“And where, in the devil’s name,” said Buckingham, “did you pick up such a word?”

“No doubt, in one of his own modest poems, said Etherege—“*The Perfect Enjoyment*, for example.”

“I marvel what he means by such a phrase,” cried Sedley.

“The meaning of it depends much, if not altogether, upon the speaker,” replied the Earl. “With your parsons it symbolizes tithe-pigs and glebe-lands; in the city it stands for thousands, more or less, as the case may be; and

with us of the better file, it is to be construed by a well-cut hose, and the art of tickling a guitar."

"Sagely expounded, most learned Rochester," said the Duke; "more especially in the last article, for since Charles has taken it into his head to patronize the Italian, Francisco Corbeta, you shall as surely find a guitar on every toilette, as the paint and patches, which have been transferred of late from the ladies of the town to the ladies of the Court."

"A very nice distinction," said Rochester; "I could never see the difference."

"Perhaps not," replied Buckingham. "But, setting aside these abstruser matters, what does your morality intend in this affair of the Andalusian? I see by the twinkling of your eye that you are brewing mischief of some kind. Out with it, man, and we'll take a brother's part with you against the common enemy."

"An elder brother's, I am afraid, and we all know what that comes to, without the help of arithmetic. No, no, friend Buckingham, the lion ever hunts alone, and I've at least so

much of the noble brute's nature in me that want no companion to help in bringing down the quarry."

At this moment came up a gaudily-dressed Jewess, who, though considerably beyond the prime of life, might still be considered handsome. As she slowly passed them, a furtive glance was hastily exchanged between her and the Earl, but, however guarded, these symptoms of intelligence did not escape the quick eye of Buckingham. His suspicions were roused in an instant, and, as it was impossible to suppose she could be an object of attraction to a man like Rochester, he immediately set her down as being in some way connected with the threatened scheme of vengeance upon the Andalusian. He was the more confirmed in this idea by the Earl's visible anxiety to get away from them, masked, indeed, though but imperfectly, by the fear of betraying how deeply the Jewess was interested in his projects.

To have shown this was in fact to give Buckingham a ready clue to his secret, by pointing out the individual to be bribed. So, at least, the Duke argued with himself, nor was his convic-

tion at all lessened by Rochester's cool and positive denial. To all such asseverations he replied, with a laugh—

“It won't do, Rochester. Why, man, don't I see that, like the Psalmist, you are longing for the wings of a dove, to fly after the Jewess, and, indeed, would be off directly, only you are afraid lest we should follow close upon your heels, and get, as a Puritan would say, to the root of the matter?”

“Nay,” said Rochester, “if you preach in the Puritan's vein, it 's time for me to put the Park between us ; I'd as lief hear one of Dryden's rhyming tragedies, and they sit worse than camomile on the stomach. So, Heaven be with you, my dear friends ; pray you now take good heed to yourselves in my absence ; right sad and sorry should I be were any mischance to befall your innocence.”

Before they could stay him, or even reply to his ironical farewell, he had made his escape from them, at least for the present, though the end was far from being so certain. It was wit against wit, malice against malice, the parties being pretty fairly matched. To thwart

his scheme, whatever it might be, since they were not allowed to take a part in it, was much too agreeable a pastime to be neglected, besides that each, after his own fashion, was desirous of winning for himself the Andalusian. Sedley, being already encumbered with a wife, sought in her a mistress; Buckingham wooed simply that he might defeat others, and laugh at their disappointment; and Etherege would gladly have persuaded her into marriage, full as much for the sake of her wealth as of her beauty. Independently of her rare personal qualities, she had in possession an ample fortune, bequeathed to her by her late husband, a noble Sevillian, and a yet larger inheritance in prospective, if the law should eventually allow her claims. Her father, a rich English merchant, had, in the hey-day of his blood, married a lady of Cadiz, but, whether it was from religious or national differences, or whether from tempers naturally ill-assorted, they grew tired of each other in the very first year of their union, and separated by mutual consent, a little before the birth of our heroine. The Englishman returned to his native country,

while the lady,—a most unusual thing with Spanish mothers,—retired to a small family-estate in Andalusia, where she devoted herself entirely to the education of her daughter.

Time rolled on, until, after many years of successful industry, the merchant, loaded with wealth and civic honours, was attacked by a disorder that from the first he felt to be fatal, and in that trying hour his thoughts naturally reverted to the mother and child he had so long neglected. The sense of his utter loneliness, for he had no other relations near in blood, or associated to him by habit, made him more open to these awakening impressions of regret and tenderness; he resolved to smoothe his death-pillow, as far as was possible, by doing a tardy act of justice to those who, but for what he now considered the fault of his own temper, had been at his bed-side with a love beyond the price of gold or silver. This resolution was adopted just in time to be carried into effect, but too late to benefit his widow, for she died within a week of his own decease, and thus Maria, in her twentieth year, found herself compelled to visit England,

and plunge into a law-suit with a score of distant relations, who contested her father's will, and had fastened on the inheritance. To this journey she was the less disinclined from the double loss of her mother and her husband, the same pestilential disorder having carried off both, and at nearly the same time. It is true, she had never loved him, in the usual meaning of the word, as it is applied to that fierce and all-absorbing passion which unites the hearts of the young and ardent; for that he was much too old; but by his unceasing tenderness, and an indulgence, which perhaps rendered more wayward a disposition it could not altogether corrupt, he had so far won upon her affections that she wept for his loss as for a parent. With this necessary digression, we return to the party in the Mulberry garden.

While the mischievous trio were yet in full debate on the best means of realizing their projects, they spied the Jewess coming back, full, as it seemed, of bustle and the importance of some secret mission. She was hurrying by them, to all appearance, unconscious, or at

least unmindful, of their being friends of Rochester, when the duke crossed her path, and, taking off his plumed hat, made so profound an obeisance that the feathers fairly swept the ground before her. His companions were not slow in following this example.

“Fairest daughter of Judah!” said Etherege on one side.

“Spouse of the mighty Ahasuerus!” exclaimed Sedley on the other.

“Most beauteous and lovely Vashti!” cried Buckingham, with a second flourish of his hat before replacing it on his head.

The Jewess looked with a keen glance from one to the other, and then drily said,—

“Rachael, I am called by my people, not Vashti, so please you, gentles—the poor Jewess, Rachael,—who prays of you to let her pass, seeing that she is on a Christian’s errand.”

“The Christian must e’en tarry ’till a better Christian has been served,” said Buckingham.

Again the Jewess gave him one brief scrutinizing glance, the eagerness of which was not a little at variance with the assumed passiveness of her reply—

“Ah well, if your Grace says so, so it must be, I suppose.”

“It must, indeed, most orient pearl of Judah, as yourself shall confess presently. Step aside with me into the next arbour, for it were not well that we should be seen in converse together. Rochester may not have left the Park yet.”

The Jewess gave a smile of intelligence at the Earl's name, and they retreated into one of the arbours already mentioned. Here, secure from the general gaze, the plotters began their attack upon her fidelity, with bright gold for the present, and brighter promises for the future. The latter she might have withstood, but when was one of Abraham's descendants found proof against gold, provided only the temptation was administered in sufficient doses? Rachael at least could not plume herself on being exempt from this general failing of her tribe; the sight alone of the precious metal made her eyes glisten; its touch was altogether irresistible; for a few pieces of gold she did not scruple to betray Rochester's scheme, as far as she was cognizant of it, and so she would have done had it concerned his neck, instead

of being, as it was, mere matter for a nine days' wonder.

The conclave had just broken up, and were about to leave the arbour, when the Jewess, who went first, suddenly and roughly pushed the others back, exclaiming, "Hist! she's there!"

"Where?" said Buckingham, eagerly craning out his neck to get a sight of the Andalusian, to whom of course he referred the exclamation; "I can see nothing of her?"

"Nor I," said Etherege.

"Back!" cried the Jewess, spreading out her arms to prevent their egress; "'tis a dull angler that lets his shadow fall upon the stream he is fishing. Back, I tell you; the Andalusian has all the jealousy of her country, and, if she catches a glimpse of us together, may ask more questions than I can answer."

"But where the plague is she?" repeated the impatient Buckingham; "sure you were not born on St. John's eve, that you should see things invisible, though, if you were, I don't know how it should advantage you, being a Jewess. 'Tis a Christian prerogative, Rachael."

"To fright a bird is not the way to catch it," said Rachael, still keeping him back, while, at the same time she pointed to a small, but beautiful, figure in the dress of an orange-girl, who walked with a hesitating step under the mulberry trees, and evidently in expectation of meeting some one.

"'Tis she! the identical she!" exclaimed Buckingham. "What an egregious ass was I to be cheated out of sight and sense by a straw bonnet and a bit of woollen! I ought to have known her, though she had masqueraded in the hat and robes of a cardinal."

"Of the Pope himself," cried Etherege; "the whole Court, with the city to boot, cannot match that face and figure; Castlemaine by her side is a dowdy, and even Stewart must strike her topsails to such a carrack."

"But why in that disguise?" said Etherege; "solve me that, most learned Ædipus."

"Why? thou most simple Cymon—why, but because she shames to be seen on a visit to a mountebank?"

"Mountebank?" cried Sedley laughing; "is it thus you talk of the most famous and alto-

gether renowned Alexander Bendo, astrologer and physician, who has been honourably received at the Court of Prester John, and hobbled and nobbed in a cup of mare's milk with the great Cham of Tartary ? ”

“ ‘Fore George ! ” exclaimed Buckingham, “ I’ll after the gipsy, and see at what rate she sells her oranges. ”

“ You’ll do no such thing, ” said the Jewess, again holding him back, “ unless you wish the prize to slip through your fingers. The hunter does not show himself to the deer he seeks to strike. ”

With some difficulty, and by threats of abandoning his cause, Rachael prevailed upon the Duke to follow her more prudent counsel, for with his usual thoughtless and capricious temper he was ready enough to sacrifice every thing to the whim of the moment. Etherege and Sedley too, who expected much pleasure from the accomplishment of their mischievous frolic, united in her remonstrances, and having by their help carried her point, she hastened to the Andalusian.

“ Holy father Abraham ! ” said the Jewess

on joining her, with an affectation of much surprise,—“what makes you here alone? why tarried you not at home, as agreed upon, till I came to fetch you?”

“’Tis nearly an hour after the time,” replied Dolores angrily. “I was tired of waiting for you. But let us get into a coach as soon as possible, for the impertinence of these loungers to the seeming orange-girl is intolerable. Had I masked it in doublet and hose instead of the woollen petticoat, I might have been tempted to try the weight of my hand on some of them. As it is, I can scarce forbear them.”

“That would be to license yet farther insolence,” said the cautious Jewess; “there’s many a one would tell you that a blow from your hand was as fair a challenge as any that could be given by your lips. Let us rather hasten through the Park to Whitehall gate, where we shall be sure to find a coach, for the open weather offers little temptation to any of these butterflies to hide their gilded wings and painted bodies behind a glass window.”

This was true enough, according to the fashion of the time, when, as a celebrated cour-

tier observed, "the women greatly preferred the pleasure of showing almost their whole persons to the convenience of a modern coach," by which term of "modern," he meant to designate the carriages with glass windows, then newly introduced. With as much haste as the various loungers would allow to the passage of a Jewess and a supposed orange-girl, neither of them very sacred characters in the estimation of high or low, they took their way through the Mulberry Garden; but, after having met with several rude questioners, whose attacks it required all Rachael's skill to parry, they were at length fairly brought to a stand by a young man dressed indeed in the height of fashion, but who evidently did not belong to the butterfly tribe around them. His face was grave even to sadness, and in his sober carriage might be read, as far as outward show could be trusted to, a steady mind little likely to be caught by the follies or the vices of the age. It was in a tone of mingled surprise and pain that he exclaimed—"Maria!—Señora Dolores, I would say—in the name of Heaven, what make you here in this disguise, of all others

the best calculated to provoke insult?—or why indeed in any habit that does not belong to your name and station?”

“Neither Molly, nor Dolly,” said the Andalusian, affecting the pert manners of an orange-girl. “Please you to buy any fruit this morning? you shall have a cheap penny-worth.”

“This is useless mummery,” replied the young man, the colour mounting to his brow while he spoke. “No masquerade can hide you from the eyes of one who loves with a passion so true and ardent as that which, you well know, is consuming me.”

The Andalusian was silent for a moment, when, either moved by compassion or as the shortest way to escape from his importunity, she said—“Well, Alfred, I must needs fling aside the mask, since denial avails me not. But content you with this acknowledgment, my friend, for here our conference must end; I have business on hand.”

“Business!” re-echoed Alfred — and with that woman in your company! Do you know who and what she is?”

“Do you?” interrupted the Jewess.

“A known thief, a notorious pander, a dealer in unhallowed philtres, a provider—as some say—of poison for wives weary of the marriage-yoke, and heirs who have waited too long for their inheritance!” exclaimed the young man, the bitterness and vehemence of his tones increasing with each fresh allegation.

“And in which of these characters do you need my help?” asked the Jewess, with a bitter smile. “For so godly a young man, you have got a useful handmaiden in me, if all you say be true.”

Alfred was about to reply with no little wrath to this taunt, when the Andalusian broke in hastily, and in a tone of authority that silenced both parties—

“Be silent, Rachael. Not another word, Alfred; you can have nothing to do with me, or with my pleasure, be it what it may. Besides, you might have known that I do not lightly brook contradiction. Fare you well for the present. I shall expect you at my ball on Friday, only take care to bring a better mood with you, and one more fitted to the occasion.”

And taking Rachael by the arm, as if still farther to mark how little good-will she bore to his counsels, she hastily bent her way to Whitehall Gate, which she was fortunate enough to reach without any serious interruption. Here, having got into the first coach that offered itself, she bade the coachman drive to Tower-street.

"I know," said the man; "you mean the conjuror's—he that lodges at the goldsmith's, next door to the Black Swan. Dang it," he muttered to himself, as he mounted his box, "I drive more women to that chap's than I do to both the play-houses."

For several moments, the Andalusian maintained a thoughtful silence while the ponderous vehicle, much unlike its modern prototypes, was slowly rumbling along the unpaved streets, which indeed were in so bad a state that the transit to and from any place between Westminster and London Bridge was more usually made by water, at the moderate charge of three pence for sculls and sixpence for a pair of oars. Alfred's warnings had made a deeper impression upon her mind than she had been willing

to allow ; but pride and constitutional obstinacy worked together to defeat their salutary effect, and Rachael, skilful alike from nature and long habit in reading the moods of her employers, was equally silent, lest her words might awake a spirit of opposition. "Our fair pouter," thought she to herself, "will soon find her tongue again, if I do n't provoke a continuance of the sullen fit by question." And even so it happened. The Andalusian, tiring of this long silence, and evidently as little satisfied with herself as with her companion, turned suddenly upon her—

"Do you know, Rachael, I am puzzled to tell whether I am the greater fool, or you the greater rogue, in this business."

"May you prove as wrong in the one, as you certainly are in the other!" replied Rachael.

"Humph!" ejaculated the Andalusian; "that pretty speech of yours may be construed either way; and, notwithstanding the smile, with which you sweeten it, I can't help thinking that the doubt is intended for my good sense, and the certainty for your own honesty. Why are you so anxious that I should see this

mountebank, or astrologer, or whatever else the fellow may choose to call himself? I dare be sworn he 's an impostor."

"He must be a rare one, then," answered the Jewess, "for half the Court-ladies believe most truly in him, and even the king is said to have paid him more than a single visit."

"If he really be the wizard you say he is," replied the Andalusian, "my fault will be all the greater; our church—that is, *my* church—for, unhappy creature that you are, man and saints alike disown you—my church, I say, condemns such traffic with the servants of the Evil One."

"You mistake this matter," said the Jewess, coldly; "he is no wizard, but a necromancer, or magician, and there is a great difference between the two, as every hind can tell you."

"How so, Jewess? expound; for I understand you not."

"The magician," explained Rachael, "commands the evil spirits by force of superior knowledge, by long vigils, and much fasting; the wizard is their servant, or, at best, is in league with these enemies of mankind."

“It may all be as you say, and yet, to my poor thinking, it sounds very much like practice; not that I deny the devil has both slaves and masters amongst men; Heaven forbid I should be guilty of such heresy!”—and she crossed herself devoutly—“nay, our own king, Philip, the second of that name, had the gift of seeing visions—as many others have, being born on a Christmas, or Good-Friday—and hence, they say, his haggard looks, for the spirit, while yet in its fleshly tabernacle, can ill bear such communion with another world; I have heard, too, when a child, how his own physician, Mercatus, saw a lovely woman break a steel mirror to pieces by a single glance of her eye, and blast the stoutest oaks by merely looking on them. Yet, though these things are, and I know them to be, still you have, at all times, so much the air of a deceiver, that, were you to speak gospel truth, it would be a hard matter to believe you.”

“If you think so,” replied the Jewess, bearing her keen gaze unflinchingly—“if you think so, it is not yet too late to turn back.”

“For aught I know, that might be the wisest

course," said the Andalusian. "And yet, if he should prove a true prophet after all—it would be so delightful to lift up the curtain of the future, though it were only for a moment, and peep into old Time's show-box!—one might chance to see some rare things!"

She paused awhile, as if debating the matter with herself, but we need hardly wonder if a mind, by nature strong, should yet have been unable to resist the common appetite for things beyond the sphere of reason. The real world is all inadequate to satisfy either our hearts or our imagination, and therefore it is we fly to the supernatural.

"I'll not turn back, Rachael," was at length her exclamation.

If the Jewess meditated a reply, it was cut short by the stopping of the coach at the Signor Bendo's lodging, an old-fashioned house, with diamond-shaped windows, set in lead, and a first floor that projected into the street, affording an imperfect sort of shelter in rain and sunshine to the jeweller's goods below. Upon the door was a huge brass knocker, shaped into an uncouth resemblance of a lion's

head; above it were a gilded pestle and mortar, answering precisely the same end that a party-coloured gas-lamp does now-a-days, inasmuch as it indicated that within dwelt a member of the healing art; and yet higher up, for the benefit of those who could not interpret these mystic symbols, was a board, whereon were inscribed the name and occupation of Signor Alexander Bendo, with a sort of Irish invitation to patients to enter and be cured of more diseases than in their ignorance they had ever dreamt of.

The door of this characteristic domicile was opened by a tall fellow, dressed much after the fashion of a wandering Armenian bishop, that is, in a long woollen robe with a border of some coarse fur, and a tall-pointed cap of the same material. To their enquiries whether the Signor was at leisure to receive them, this singular master of the ceremonies replied only by a mute invitation to follow him, when leading the way up the stairs he conducted them into what might have seemed the laboratory of some alchemist. But, indeed, astrology, alchemy, and quackery went for the most part

hand in hand in those days, the sage, who read the stars, having an eye also to the terrestrial occupation of converting lead into gold, while at the same time he was deeply read in the secret virtues of herb and mineral.

The chamber was one of those lofty, semi-gothic halls, of which, even in the present day, a few examples may be found in the dark lanes and alleys of the City, though long since degraded from the rank of domestic dwellings into stores and ware-rooms for the coarser sorts of merchandize. It was dimly lighted by windows that were large indeed, but which being divided, as we have already seen, into a multitude of small panes, in a frame-work of lead, the intercepted light fell sparingly upon the space below, and lent a mysterious gloom well calculated to work upon the imagination of the timid or the romantic. From the ceiling was suspended a stuffed alligator, extending like a canopy over a massive oak-table, which stood on crooked legs, terminating in griffin's claws. On this might be seen globes, astrolabes, alembics, retorts, divining-rods, and the other customary implements of the craft, the

use or name of which would have equally puzzled the uninitiated. Close behind the table, long flowing curtains of black serge extended from the ceiling to the floor, evidently hiding some recess, and at the opposite end of the room was an enormous mirror.

"Speak under your breath," whispered their conductor, as they entered this appropriate den of necromancy; "or, what were still better, speak not at all, except in answer to the master, should he think fit to see you. He is not always in the mood to hold converse with earthly visitors."

Thus saying, he beat upon what seemed to be a metallic drum, supported by a tripod of the same material. It gave back a hollow but but not unmusical sound, something like the tones of a cathedral bell, the deep vibrations ringing a full minute on the ear, and filling the listeners with an awful expectation of what they might call forth. But nothing was seen or heard, in answer, except that Dolores thought she saw a slight ripple from top to bottom of the curtain, as when water is gently agitated by the wind.

Again their conductor struck the metallic drum, or whatever else it might be called, when the same wavy motion showed itself as before upon the curtain, though the summons failed to produce any other result. But when, after a long pause of ominous expectation, he repeated the blow a third time, a low, wild music was heard in reply, and the cloth, slowly ascending, discovered the necromancer on a sort of throne, as immoveable as if no life had flowed in his veins, or animated his muscles. This marble figure was indued in a scarlet robe, draping about him like a Roman toga, but his hands and feet were bare, and his head was without any other covering than that which was supplied by a quantity of long shiny black hair, hanging down below his shoulders. An enormous beard of the same dye, and eyebrows of such portentous size it was hardly possible to suppose them natural, gave to his face a wild, gloomy expression, which few would have looked upon with very comfortable feelings. In his right hand he carried a staff, or wand, in shape and colour resembling a contorted green serpent, from the mimic or

real eyes of which shot a cold light like the gleamings of a glow-worm.

For several minutes not a word was spoken by any one, the gaze of the necromancer remaining steadily and even fiercely fixed upon the Andalusian, who, on her part, could not keep her eyes from him; his glance had all the real or supposed fascination of the rattlesnake, and, as she did not dare to offend so near a friend of the Devil by any outward signs of prayer, she inwardly besought the protection of the Virgin. A stern, solemn smile, less akin to laughter than to bitterness of heart, passed over the astrologer's pale face, the first sign he had hitherto given of his being ought beyond a marble statue, and, slowly rising from his throne, he pointed the magic rod towards the door. At this signal, the man in the Armenian cap and robe placed both hands to his forehead after the Oriental fashion, and, having prostrated himself till his brow well nigh touched the floor, he retired. No sooner was the door closed behind him than the astrologer thought fit to break his silence.

"Maria de los Dolores," he said,— "in vain

would you deceive me by that, or any other disguise; it no more hides you from me than the thinnest and purest glass shuts out the light of Heaven. Little worthy were I to sit, as I have done, at the council-table of kings and emperors, had I lacked skill to detect your real self, though your raven-hair had been bleached to the whiteness of the dove's breast, and your face seared with red-hot iron, till the mother, who bore you, had not known her child. Nay, answer me not," he continued in a yet more peremptory tone, seeing that she was about to break in with some disclaimer,—"you came here in the pride of your heart to laugh at the mountebank—the impostor—he who had duped, as you interpreted it, the keenest and the wisest—the witty Buckingham—the satiric Rochester—the sagacious Clarendon—the worldly-minded Charles—he was to stand revealed and abashed by the superior cunning of the Andalusian. We shall see. Have you the courage to hear all that I can say, to see all that I can show?"

Maria was not a little confounded by the astrologer's volubility, as well as startled by

his recognition of her through a disguise she had fancied to be impenetrable. But, with her proneness to look at every thing on the ridiculous side, however it might come to her clothed in gravity, this was only a transient feeling, and indeed his voice had in a great measure dispelled the very illusion it was no doubt his purpose to augment.

The awe which till now had seemed to chain her, soul and body, began to pass away with the rapidity of a sea-fog clearing off before sun and wind, and it was in a tone of mockery that she replied, "Most learned Signor Bendo, say and do your most terrible; I have ears that will hardly be startled by any thing, except it be a cracked voice or a jangling lute; and as for my eyes, they have witnessed some things under an Andalusian sky more like to terrify a woman than ghost or goblin."

"You have a bold spirit, lady," replied the astrologer; "but such should they have who would lift the veil of futurity or traffic with the Evil One."

"Oh, then, you can raise the fiend?" said the Andalusian—"but can you make him tell

truth when you have raised him? for he has but an indifferent character in that respect. Folks do not scruple to scandalize him for an intolerable liar."

"Woe to those that are wise in their own sight," rejoined the astrologer in the gruffest tones of his voice. "Know, foolish woman, that by my art I can control the arch-fiend himself—"

"And send him, booted and spurred, to do the errands of any one who will pay you half-a-crown for your trouble. May so simple a person as myself ask how you manage this feat?—with what spells, with what new-found language, do you coax, or frighten, him into doing the office of a penny foot-post? methinks he should be wiser than this, or he 's but a silly coxcomb after all, and has little claim to be called akin to the serpent."

The face of the necromancer was horribly distorted at this sarcasm, but whether with wrath or suppressed laughter, it would have been hard to say.

"Follow me," he exclaimed hastily, as if desirous of putting an end to these attacks,

when, seeing that she signed to Rachael to follow, he sternly added—"but it must be alone; they, whom you would see, brook no intruders in their converse with the world of life, and least of all will they hold communion with a race that denies the cross, at which themselves tremble. The Jewess must tarry here awhile and make her own thoughts her companions."

For a moment Dolores hesitated to accept this invitation, the idea of a *tête-à-tête* with the astrologer carrying with it something suspicious, but her heart was high, and, female curiosity prevailing over more prudential considerations, she was about to follow, when the heavy tramping of feet was heard in the passage. With this too came mingled the sound of the Armenian's voice, in altercation, as it seemed, with some intruders whom he was endeavouring to keep out. Before any of the party could recover from the surprise of this unwelcome interruption, the door was violently flung open, and in rushed a detachment of city-constables, the leader of which strode up to the Astrologer, and, unceremoniously snatching

off wig and beard, revealed to the astonished Dolores the face of the most distinguished profligate of a time not a little fertile in such characters.

"You see, Mistress," said the constable—"you see into what hands you had fallen; and if so be you don't, it's my duty, by virtue of my office, to tell you that this is Wilmot, Earl of Rochester."

"And if you knew so much," said the unabashed roué, "you might have treated my chin with a little more consideration. It's dangerous, they say, pulling a lion by the beard."

"The truth of the matter is this, Mistress," said the constable, without heeding him; "this here Lord, who calls himself a lion—I think as how he looks much more like an ass—intended to carry you off, as he did an heiress the other day—let him deny it if he can."

"Me deny!" said Rochester; "and where-upon should I do so, thou lean-witted bearer of the staff and lantern?—was it not done handsomely?—did I not top my part of astrologer?—could Lilly have done it better?—I'll be judged by this fair damsel."

"Why, then, a murrain on your impudence!" cried the exasperated constable. "Holloa, you sir!"—this was addressed to the Armenian, who had followed them into the room, but who, seeing how matters stood, was now quietly making his retreat—"Stay him, my masters; stay him!"

"By all means," said Rochester; "*solamen miseris socios habuisse doloris*; 'tis a comfort to have a partner in one's troubles; so uncase thee, Thomas Fanshaw, thou wicked consort of the wicked Rochester—thou English Leporello of the English Don Juan."

With infinite gravity the supposed Armenian doffed his high cap and furred robe, and stood confessed to the spectators, as Thomas Fanshaw, the companion and imitator of the Earl in all his follies and debaucheries.

"To the Compter with him, my masters," shouted the constable, brandishing his staff in high wrath, and with every inclination, as it seemed, to apply it to the head of at least one, if not of both, the offenders. "We 'll hear what his Worship, the Lord Mayor, will say to all this."

"Have with you, boys," shouted Rochester; "it's long since I've had a chat with the old fogram."

"Mercy on me!" ejaculated the constable, raising eyes and hands in excess of horror at this irreverent naming of the city's Dagon—"he calls his worship a fogram!—did you hear, Martin?—a fogram!"

Martin shook his head with infinite energy, unable to do more than re-echo "fogram!"—and the others, taking up the hateful word, repeated in chorus, "fogram! fogram!"

There was something so inexpressibly ludicrous in the whole scene that Maria, at all times more than sufficiently volatile, burst into a fit of laughter, a breach of respect that seemed to scandalize the constable little less than the consummate impudence displayed by Rochester. He seized her somewhat roughly by the arm, saying, "It's my belief, mistress, you'll laugh on the wrong side of your face, ere long; by virtue of my office I shall take you, too, before the magistrate."

"Me?" exclaimed Maria.

"You, Mistress," replied the constable; "by virtue of my office."

"Tantara-ra-ra, rogues all," sang the incorrigible Rochester, in as much glee as if he had been going to a feast instead of a prison. "Of course we are to march Newgate fashion, two and two, so give me your hand, my fair Calipolis, that they may couple us together. Nothing like being married by the blacksmith."

"I say no to that," said the Andalusian.

"And so do I, by virtue of my office," cried the constable. "Peter and I will take care of the lady, Martin, while you and the rest do, as I told you, with that—"

"Tantara-ra-ra ! again " — sang Rochester, snatching a cocked hat from the head of the nearest constable, and clapping it on his own—
"Rogues all, tantara-ra-ra, rogues all."

"Zookers !" cried the constable with increasing wrath, "an' these be the manners larnt at Court, I thank my stars that I was born and bred within the sound of Bow bells. But come, mistress, you and I must be trotting, for it 's well nigh noon, and his Worship aye gets angrier as he grows hungrier; it 's parlous work speaking to him, I promise you when his stomach cries 'Cupboard.' "

CHAPTER II.

Have I this meeting wrought with cunning,
Which, when I come, I find thee shunning?
Rouse thy amorous thoughts, and twine me,
All my interest I resign thee.
Shall we let slip this mutual hour,
Comes so seldom in our power?

A MAD WORLD MY MASTERS.

THE head-constable had now been gone some time with his female prisoner, but still his subordinates did not appear in any hurry to fulfil the orders he had left them. Something of consequence, it was evident, detained them, for, as the church-clocks in the neighbourhood chimed the different quarters, they nudged each other, and whispered earnestly amongst them-

selves, their faces exhibiting more and more satisfaction as the time went on. As to the Jewess, she was, to all appearance, fast composing herself to sleep, and even Rochester, as if worn out by his former pranks, sate wrapt up in a brown study, his eyes being fixed upon the ceiling. The truth is, he was busy, for want of other occupation, in concocting one of those bitter satires upon Charles, which, about once in every twelvemonth, were sure to cause his disgrace at Court, and produce for him a temporary exile from the Capital, in his opinion by no means the least of punishments. So great indeed was his horror of hills and green fields that he is said to have exclaimed, one day, to a dog that had bitten him—"You infernal brute! may you be married some fine morning, and packed off into the country. Curse you, you are too bad for hanging."

All parties were beginning to tire of these various modes of killing time, when a tremendous knocking at the outer door gave an unexpected change to the scene. The constables looked confused, and, as if they would rather be any where else; Rachael started up from

her real, or supposed, slumber, with wonderful alacrity, her face evincing much more surprise than pleasure at the interruption; and Rochester, in the hope of fresh mischief, left unfinished the rhyme he had been hammering at for the last five minutes.

“May I never touch wine-cup again!” he exclaimed, “if the Lord Mayor hasn’t despatched his friends, Gog and Magog, to summon us all before him; nothing short of the giants’ clubs could produce all that clatter. There it goes again!—well banged, Gog!—well hammered, Magog!—you ply your maces bravely, lads—

“Open locks,
Whoever knocks.”

The bolts and bars of the witch’s cavern flew not back more readily at these magic rhymes than did the astrologer’s door, though in the latter case they were helped out by the agency of the goldsmith, who, annoyed by this unwonted clamour, went himself and let in the disturbers. The trampling of feet was then heard in the passage, and in the next moment

Alfred made his appearance on the scene, followed by half-a-dozen stout fellows, all armed with sword and pistols.

"What ! Alfred Trevanion !" cried Rochester ; "by the noise you made, I took you for the City mace-bearer, plying the door with his staff of office."

"I am in no mood for jesting," replied Alfred, sternly.

"I never accused you of a jest, or of understanding a jest," said Rochester ; "no one could, who looked for half a moment on that damned unhappy physiognomy of yours."

Alfred half unsheathed his sword, the colour mounting to his cheek and brow as he demanded in a voice of suppressed passion,—"Where is the Señora de los Dolores ? she came hither two hours since—that I well know,—lured by the wiles of yonder infamous woman, to consult, as she imagined, the astrologer, Alexander Bendo."

"A sad rogue, that Alexander Bendo," replied Rochester, with mock gravity ; "I fear me I must cut his acquaintance."

"Your lordship's words are truer than your

meaning," said Alfred, bitterly. "But, once more, where is the Señora de los Dolores?"

"Upon my soul," cried Rochester, "that's more than I can tell you; when I have put off the astrologer's cap and gown, I am no wiser than the simplest of my neighbours,—your worshipful self, for instance. If, however, you would confer on this, or any other topic, with the all-to-be-admired, and never-sufficiently-to-be-commended, Alexander Bendo, you may command my interest with the signor."

"You refuse then to tell me where or how you have disposed of the Señora de los Dolores," repeated Alfred, with that deep calmness of tone that belongs only to wrath when it is at the fullest.

A sudden light broke in upon Rochester. For the first time he saw, and wondered at his previous blindness, that Trevanion had nothing to do with the pretended civic forces. Who then were they?—the agents, no doubt, of some rival, employed in carrying off the Andalusian. The moment this idea struck him, he turned upon Martin, and, seizing him by the

collar, shook him soundly, while he exclaimed, —“ Who the devil are you, rascal?—or rather, who was it set you on to play the constable? for, though you are thick-skulled enough for the part, I can see by your eye you are no true man. What! you won't answer?—help me to strangle him, Trevanion; the rogue has got the neck of a bull, and might defy any fingers except the hangman's.”

Under this rough handling, the black wig and enormous whiskers came off from the pretended Martin, leaving behind them a flaxen head of hair and a chin that was as smooth as a bowling-green. In the biped, thus stripped of his adventitious plumage, Rochester was at no loss to recognize one of the Duke's most trusted emissaries, Master Josiah Niven, a man sufficiently notorious at the time, though his name has sunk into oblivion with many better things, and, but for this brief notice of him, had been utterly forgotten.

“Fore Gad,” cried the Earl, turning to Trevanion, “our friend Buckingham has made a cast beyond either of us. He has snapped up pussey, like a cur as he is, just as I had

hunted the game down, and now if we want to know in what hole or corner he has stowed her away, I fancy we must inquire of Mistress Rachael, yonder ; she is much more likely to be in the secret than honest Josiah, who, not to slander him, has not wit enough to be half the rogue he wishes to be."

But to all Trevanion's threats the Jewess turned a deaf ear, seeming to take a malicious delight in playing with his rage and baffling his curiosity. It was in vain he threatened her with the whips and chains of Bridewell; they had long ago lost their terrors for one who seemed to concentrate in her single person all the natural obstinacy of her whole race. Acting upon his knowledge of this point in her character, the Earl left Trevanion to ruin his own cause with her, well knowing that when he got her alone it was only requisite to bribe high enough, and she would betray Buckingham, or any one else, with all their kith and kin, to the tenth generation.

In the mean while, the fair Andalusian, the object of all these plots and counterplots, was being carried, as she imagined, before the Lord

Mayor, and was, in silence, tasking her utmost ingenuity for the means of concealing her real name and rank from his expected perquisitions. This illusion lasted so long as the coach was slowly rumbling through a multitude of bye-streets, which, in her ignorance of the city, passed with her for the readiest way to the Mansion House. But at length, when they had got clear of all the buildings, except that here and there a lone cottage, or a solitary farmhouse would shew itself at distant intervals in the fields and wastes that spread out on either side of the road, a suspicion that some foul play was intended, and that she was not yet out of the hands of Rochester, grew stronger on her mind with every moment; and the character of the man, coupled with the unbounded licentiousness of the time, gave full warrantry for such a fear. Abduction was then so venial an offence that the Earl had already carried off one lady of wealth and rank with no worse consequences to himself than a temporary banishment from the Court, his achievement being rather a theme for wonder than inferring any stain that should exclude him from society.

The appearance of two horsemen, coming up the same road they travelled, but in an opposite direction, seemed to offer a chance of escape that she resolved not to let pass by without at least an attempt to avail herself of it. But either the expression of her face, or some involuntary gesture, betrayed the intent before it could be carried into effect, for the crafty constable, while the travellers were yet at a distance, warned her against attempting any thing of the kind, a counsel which he yet farther strengthened by the ostentatious display of a broad, two-edged knife, while, at the same time, he drew down the blind on her side of the carriage. As it was impossible to calculate how far desperados of this sort might choose to go, Maria, without for a moment losing her self-possession, took the more prudent part, and remained passive.

It was near the close of the evening when, after having passed through a long tract of unfrequented road, the coach at last stopt in front of a secluded mansion, not old enough to be called antique, and yet by no means built in the fashion of the day. From the appearance of work-

men on the roof, and the ladders placed against a scaffolding immediately below the cope-stone, it was evident the house was undergoing some repairs, a circumstance no otherwise deserving notice than as it led to important results. But we must not anticipate.

Acting upon the prudent resolution she had adopted a little while before, the Andalusian allowed her captors, without any show of resistance, to assist her from the coach and conduct her into the house, where a table, set out with the choicest wines, and provided with an ample collation of cold meats, seemed to show that her coming was not altogether unexpected. Covers were laid for two, an arrangement which was almost immediately explained by the entrance of the Duke of Buckingham from some inner chamber. He advanced to receive his involuntary guest with all that ease and grace which formed the most pleasing, if not the most prominent, feature in his volatile character.

“You are welcome, Señora, most welcome to my poor mansion; I hope to make it so

agreeable to you that you will not choose to leave it in a hurry."

For a moment Maria was staggered and confounded by this sudden shifting of the principal persons of the drama; but, as the first surprise passed off, her quick wit enabled her to unravel the whole web as readily as if she had been a party to the weaving of it. The Duke and Rochester, it was plain, had the same end in view, each for himself and without the privity of the other, and for once, it would seem, that Buckingham had outwitted his brother in iniquity.

The parley, that now took place, can only be understood by those who have imaginations sufficiently vivid to transport them back to the days of the merry, or, as we should more justly term him, licentious monarch. Tears or indignation would to us seem the only natural results of such an outrage. But Maria neither wept nor showed any particular signs of anger, whatever might be her real feelings; with mingled wit, coquetry, and sarcasm, she repelled the insidious advances of Buckingham, shifting her ground every moment from grave

to gay, from scorn to levity, now laughing *at* him, and now laughing *with* him, her character showing as many different colours as the glass-drop that glances and glitters in the sun-light. With all his tact and long experience of woman-kind, he could make nothing of her; if he flattered, she laughed and mocked him; if he was silent, she pouted; if he threatened, she coquetted. Stung by a treatment to which he was so little accustomed, there is no knowing how far he might have gone, had not his valet abruptly entered to announce a messenger on urgent business from the king.

“From Charles?” exclaimed the Duke — “impossible!—how the plague should he come to the knowledge of this Fair Rosamond’s Bower?”

“I cannot say, your Grace; but I’m quite sure it’s Master Rainham, the youngest of his Majesty’s pages.”

“Master Rainham, is it? — Umph! that young crack-hemp is as full of mischief as my lady’s monkey. He must be looked to, though, since he comes from Charles. Will

you excuse me for a few minutes, Señora?"

"For a few hours, if you can make it convenient to stay away so long," replied Maria mockingly.

"I should most assuredly commit suicide in half the time," retorted Buckingham, as he left the room.

But hour after hour went on, and still he did not return, much to the joy of the Andalusian, who began to hope full well that in his usual spirit of fickleness, he had forgotten her altogether. Still his absence produced no change in her situation, neither the valet, who repeatedly came to inquire her pleasure, nor the old crone, who at night attended her to her bed-room, being in the least influenced by the bribes she so profusely offered to purchase her escape. By some inexplicable freak of fortune, Buckingham had actually got two honest rogues in his employ—that is, honest to himself, and rogues to all the world beside.

The chamber, into which she was now inducted for the night, was furnished in a style much more accordant with the wealth and taste of its licentious owner than with the

meagre promise held out by the exterior of the building. The profusion of carving and gilding, the rich draperies, the translucent mirrors, the beautiful, but voluptuous pictures, the downy carpets fit to be pressed by the naked foot of a Sybarite, all combined to make it a sort of Paphian temple, where Chastity herself might have turned renegade and worshipped at the shrine of passion. In an alcove, at one end of the room, was an altar-like table, formed of agate, on which stood a perforated silver chalice, pouring forth a continued stream of perfume, so subtle and intoxicating that it made the cheeks glow and the eyes sparkle as if under the influence of wine. Nor lamp nor taper was visible, yet the chamber was filled with a pale, blushing light, that came, tempered to an exquisite mildness, through vases of thin alabaster, and in that glow, so warm yet so chastened, every article of furniture assumed a new and peculiar character; the bright silks grew yet brighter, the soft velvets seemed yet softer, and, as the eye wandered from one object to another, a pleasing but indescribable languor stole over the satisfied

senses. Alarmed at the first inroads of this insidious feeling, and conscious that, if not immediately overcome, it would defy all attempts to subdue it, she hastened to fling open the lattice, when, the cold night-air rushing in, the influence of the perfumes was quickly lost in its freshness. Following this up by the yet more decisive measure of hurling the censor itself into the garden below, she once more breathed freely, and, having again closed the window, stretched herself on one of the couches, but with no intention of giving way to sleep, if she could avoid it.

For a short space this was no difficult matter to one so busily occupied with speculations on the past and future. At length, however, tired nature seemed inclined to vindicate her rights, in spite of opposition ; the real and the ideal began to mingle confusedly in her brain, the mind striving hard to maintain its vigil, while every minute the over-wearied body was dragging it back again into uneasy slumber. In this middle state, between sleeping and waking, the furniture of the room blended itself after a strange fashion with imaginary fields, or Moor-

ish palaces ; and reflections on the means of escape were as constantly broken off by the shadowings from the world of sleep—the insubstantial creations of fancy when it has out-watched the slumbering reason.

More than an hour had thus passed when, on the sudden, she was fully wakened up by the fall of some heavy substance on the floor, and, on looking round in some alarm for the cause, she beheld a dense cloud of soot and dust rising up before the fire-place, and spreading itself, mist-like, about the room. In the very thickest of this cloud lay a dimly-seen figure, sprawling and struggling as though he had been some Bottle-Imp trying to escape from the confinement of his magic phial. At the same moment the turret-clock struck twelve, and by one of those coincidences which ignorance deems wonderful, but which, in fact, are not less natural than events of more common occurrence, the expiring lights in the alabaster vases went out successively, one by one, at each beat of the bell, as if at some supernatural voice commanding their gradual extinction. Strong as her mind was, she had,

as we have already noticed, her full share of superstitious feeling, and a slight shudder came over her as she listened in breathless expectation of what was to follow. Nor was this to be wondered at. How many of the foremost men of history, sages and heroes, who feared no power embodied in flesh and blood, have yet bowed, like oriental slaves, before the shadows of superstition.

The ominous darkness had not lasted many minutes when, suddenly, a broad sheet of light flashed up at the farther end of the room, and as suddenly again contracted into a ball of flame, so vivid that at first it completely dazzled her by its excessive brilliance. As, however, her eyes became more familiar with the abrupt transition from darkness to light, she could plainly see it proceeded from a lantern in the hand of a grotesque figure, who, to judge from the testimony of his face and hands, must have made his entrance, as the witches are often said to do, by tumbling down the chimney. This strange visitant was habited in what might once have been the dress of a gallant, as they termed the fashionables of those days, but

the brightness of his hose had faded, the fur of his cloak was sadly moth-eaten, and the silk of his slashed doublet was frayed and patched till the whole bore no indifferent resemblance to Joseph's parti-coloured raiment. His band, or ruff, was broad and of the richest lace, but this piece of finery might be easily accounted for, without accusing him of unnecessary extravagance, by reference to the mixed nature of his pursuits, which were as multifarious as the branches into which roguery divides itself, all, however, engrafted on the reformado, or disbanded soldier. In his Spanish hat he wore long, dirty-white feathers, that had probably at one time graced the plume of a cavalier, or nodded on the head of some court-beauty. His morocco boots were both wide and high, with spurs fixed at the heels, as became a man of war, who had seen service in the Low Countries, and at his side dangled a huge, cross-handled sword, well calculated to infuse a wholesome awe into beholders of weak nerves and little judgment. Nature, too, had done her part in equipping him with all the bodily and mental requisites of his trade, which was

a compound of thief, dicer, pander, and bully, these ingredients being so happily mixed that it would have been extremely difficult to say which predominated. Though only of the middle-height, he was muscular enough to cope, successfully, with the tallest, always supposing that he found it more dangerous to run than to abide the brunt of battle, for it was only when at bay that he would, or could, put forth his vigour. His eyes were small and keen, glimmering restlessly in their sockets, under a brow that was gnarled and knotted as the oldest oak of the forest. To complete the portrait, his nose was exceedingly long and beaked like the hawk or vulture, so that, taken altogether, his face would have betokened resolution but for the wavering expression about the mouth and lips, which had a character of imbecility, and of voluptuousness almost approaching to the animal. Still all these harsher points were in a measure redeemed by a general show of good-humour, coming certainly not from any single feature; indeed it could hardly be said whence it emanated; but there it was,

fun and a monkey-like spirit of mischief laughing in every wrinkle of his forehead.

How a person, with such eminent gifts of mind and body, had so long escaped the preferment of the gallows was a marvel to divers folks of less wit than curiosity. The truth is they knew no more of his real character than they did of the wheels, springs, and levers, by which the hands on the dial-plates of their clocks were made to tell the hours; in either case the result was so much a matter of every day occurrence that they never doubted their being fully acquainted with the inward principles of action, and in both they were alike mistaken. He was cunning as a fox, supple as a spaniel, was equally ready to do, and silent to conceal; and had a fund of something, which, if not wit, might well pass for it at a time when refinement was equally banished from court and city, and the grossness of a joke did not render it at all the less palatable. Then, too, he held himself quite aloof from others of his way of life—that is in regard to business, never hunting in couples, for, as to the mere matter of company, neither his own habits, nor those of

the age, allowed of any such niceties, though he was far superior to most of them both in natural quickness and acquired information. But what perhaps stood him in more stead than any thing else was the happy state of his moral code, by virtue of which he made himself so useful to the rich and noble by pandering to their vices that, in the words of Prince Hal,

“They could have better spared a better man ;”

not to mention that he was too deep in their secrets for them to allow, if they could help it, of his making a public exit from the tree at Tyburn. The confession of his own peccadilloes on that grand occasion, they knew full well would be accompanied by a detail of theirs, and this was a revelation that promised to be any thing but agreeable. So strongly was this wholesome fear impressed upon them, and so well was he aware of it, that he seldom scrupled at thwarting their projects, if he had not been made a party to them, and the wayward mood was on him, a thing by no means of unfrequent occurrence. From his reckless indulgence in these fits of caprice, he

often passed with the multitude for one half-crazy, though some few there were, of more real, or imagined acuteness, who held that this extravagance was no more than a mask put on for the better hiding of his knavery. The truth probably lay, as it often does, somewhere between the two opinions ; from nature he might have inherited that extreme oddity of temper that verges upon insanity, and yet never touches it, and, finding that singularity passed current with the world in excuse for much that was questionable both in speech and action, he had indulged his capricious mood till he had not always the power of restraining it.

Though known to her only from description, Maria at once recognised in the figure before her, the notorious Cherry-Nob, a soubriquet, which, originally given to him on the score of a fiery shock of red hair, had, at last, so completely thrown into the shade the name of Jacob Snee, originally given to him by his father and god-father, that none, except a few old intimates, knew him under any but his borrowed appellation. But whatever was his

purpose—and it was most probably to rob the house,—she saw at a glance that he might be made the agent of her escape, and, stepping forward, she confronted him with a boldness that did honour to her spirit. Indeed for a moment it was doubtful whether she had not shown more courage than prudence; at the first glimpse of her he handled his sword as if to strike, but, immediately abandoning this notion, which, after all, might only be the instinct of self-defence upon a surprise, he relapsed into his half-crazy character. With the chuckle of a monkey detected in some successful piece of mischief, but himself beyond the reach of punishment, he began to chaunt a sort of crambo rhymes, with which a certain chimney-sweep was in the habit of announcing his vocation, much to the delight of the smaller fry, the shoeless and shirtless denizens of lanes and blind alleys, who, on such occasions, would follow him in troops—

“ My name it is Jack Hall—

Chimney sweep ! chimney sweep !

I rob both great and small—

Chimney sweep ! chimney sweep !

"This will not pass with me," cried the Andalusian, breaking in impatiently upon his ditty.

"Chimney sweep ! chimney sweep !" chaunted the unabashed vagrant.

"You may as well lay aside that mask," said Maria; "it is the knave I want just now, not the fool or madman, and I am willing to pay him handsomely for his services."

"I rob both great and small," said or rather sang, the grinning rascal, but in a much lower key.

"I am detained here against my will ; assist me to escape, and I'll give you——"

"How much?" interrupted Cherry-Nob, with unusual animation, and a face from which every symptom of imbecility had passed away —"How much?"

"Twenty—fifty pieces of gold."

The words acted with the force of an electric shock upon him. Every shade of folly passed away from his uncouth features in an instant, as he struck the floor with his sheathed sword, the emphasis of the action making her start, and stretched out a grimy paw, the long claw-like

fingers of which quivered to the tips with impatience to clutch the proposed honorarium :—

“I always indent before-hand for my payment.”

“I have not the gold about me,” replied the Andalusian ; “but the word of Maria de los Dolores may well pass current for the sum ten times told, either in court or city. Stay, however ; here is that which may better satisfy your scruples,” and she drew from her finger a diamond-ring ; “take this into your safe keeping till I once again stand under the shelter of my own roof, when I will redeem it and my word at the same time, by paying down the price of this night’s service in a more marketable coin.”

Cherry-Nob seized upon the glittering bribe with eagerness, and began to examine it curiously by the light of his lantern. Apparently he was satisfied of its value, for, finding it too small for any of his bony fingers, he dropped it into a pouch at his side, that was specially intended for the reception of such stray trifles as were neither too large nor too heavy to be thus carried off.

"'Tis a bargain," he said; "strike hands upon it—oh, I forgot—my paws are somewhat of the blackest, as yours would be, mistress, if they did as much work and had as little washing. And now, how shall we set about this job?—you could n't climb up the chimney, could you?"

The Andalusian shook her head.

"I thought as much; they never teach you ladies any thing useful."

With this hint on the deficiencies of female education, he held a council of war within himself how best to extricate his companion from her dilemma. There was a ladder, he well recollected, left by the workmen, in front of the house,—indeed it was that by which he had made his way up to the roof, and so down the chimney—but to avail himself of it he must first bring it round to the chamber-window, with all the chances of detection on the way by watchful dogs and waking members of the household. Now he was at all times a decided enemy to danger, and scarcely less so to trouble, and his deliberations in consequence lasted so long that Maria became impatient, if

not doubtful of his sincerity. Fixing the full glance of her dark, black eyes upon him, she exclaimed sharply—"You are long about it, friend. Surely one so deeply versed, as you are said to be, in the mysteries of the picklock, cannot be at a loss for the means of escape from a place so little guarded as this seems to be."

"The pick-lock!" replied Cherry-Nob; "what? would you have me hanged for burglary?—thank you for nothing, mistress; I have taken my degrees at Newgate under Professor Ketch—a smart hand he is with the whip, I promise you—and know the difference between breaking in at doors, and stealing down a chimney, where there's neither bolt nor bar to stop a fellow. But what the devil's that?"

The cause of this exclamation was a low tapping at the casement. While they yet listened, it was repeated.

"More thieves than myself abroad to-night," whispered Cherry Nob to the Andalusian. "Hold yourself quiet though, and in the shade, till we see what sort of customers we have to deal with."

He retreated behind the bed-curtains, drawing the screen of his dark-lantern that the light might not betray him, and invited her by signs to follow his example. But Maria, who thought no thieves half so dangerous as Buckingham, maintained her ground, much more curious of the result than fearful of any harm likely to happen to herself personally. In fact it was part of the very wilfulness of her character to laugh when others, in her place, would have wept, and to be most forward when others would have shrunk with terror.

The signal from without was repeated again and again, till at length the robber, or whatever else he might be, finding that no notice was taken of him, gently broke in two or three panes of the small, diamond-shaped glass, and, thrusting his arm through the aperture, undid the window. This was no difficult matter, the casement, like all those of the olden time, being fastened by a simple latch that opened from within, and had neither lock nor spring to keep it fast. In the next minute the Don Giovanni, or Guido Fawkes—for with his hat and lantern he might have passed for either of

these worthies—leapt from the high window-sill, and stood upon the floor, confronted, as Cherry-Nob had been just before, by the fearless Andalusian. No sooner did his first quick glance assure him that he had a female only to cope with than he burst into a loud laugh, shouting with little consideration, as it seemed, of the time or place—"Victoria! Victoria!—Odds fish—to borrow royalty's own oath—but this is the rarest adventure!—the luckiest falling in of wit and good fortune!—Oh Buckingham! Buckingham! lampoon Portsmouth, plot with Oates, rival Charles—do any thing that's most desperate, but never try conclusions with Rochester again."

"Rochester!" cried the Andalusian, now indeed beginning to feel alarmed, for to add to his usual spirit of licentious daring, he was evidently flushed with wine, as appeared by his full spongy tongue and his unsteady gait.

"Who but he?" replied the Earl, dropping the cloak from his shoulders. "Who but Rochester could have outwitted Buckingham?—Buckingham the plotter—Buckingham the crafty—Buckingham with the no-conscience

and the all-appetite—that huge devourer of virginity—who but Rochester could have trained him away, when the dove was in his clutch, on a pretended message from old Rowley, who, God wot, is thinking as little of him at this moment as of his own debts? So now for the reward of wit and valour, my pearl of Andalusia.”

“Stand off,” cried Dolores, her eyes flashing with indignation; “I am not so defenceless as you may imagine.”

“What! has the Duke returned already?—but, psha! that’s impossible; my myrmidons must have kept a better look-out than so, and by this time he’s doing penance in the Jewess’ coal-cellar. So, once more—”

“Stand off, I say—Help! help!”

And at this cry Cherry-Nob’s formidable sword descended, sheathed indeed and flatlings, but with a crashing thwack upon his skull, after the fashion of a Scarborough warning—that is, with no notice at all—and such good will was given to the blow that he fell senseless under it to the floor. In an instant a change came over the Andalusian; the kindlier and

better feelings of her sex once again prevailed in her bosom when she saw her persecutor thus stretched at his length, bleeding, and to all appearance lifeless, and it was in a tone of mingled pity and horror she exclaimed, "You have not killed him!—for God's sake, say you have not killed him!"

"Not a bit of it," replied the reformado; "it takes a great deal to knock the life out of these vermin, though, for the matter of that, there would have been few mourners at his funeral. But come, mistress; the same ladder that brought him up will take us down, only you must look sharp about it, and be off before he comes to himself again."

"But if he should bleed to death?" said Maria, still hesitating; "not for the price of worlds would I have his blood upon my head, and you see, as yet he shows no signs of life."

"Lord love your innocence, these things are nothing to a soldier"—amongst his other virtues, Cherry - Nob was an incomparable liar.—"why, I, simple as I stand here, have been twice shot through the liver, once through

the brain, and have had more gashes and slashes than a crimped-cod. What then?—a stout heart makes all well again.”

Not greatly comforted by these assurances, but having the fear of Buckingham before her eyes, she made up her mind to leave Rochester to his fate, and with a firm step, though with a heart beating somewhat higher than usual, she began to descend the ladder. Close upon her heels followed Cherry-Nob, alternately urging her to more speed, and protesting there was no danger, and in a few minutes they were free of the house, with the moon shining bright above them. But now it was that she more fully felt the difficulties of her situation. “How was she to get back again to London?” To this inquiry her conductor replied by giving a low whistle, which was immediately answered by a similar signal, and the appearance from the near copse-wood of a light cart that had probably been brought in expectation of plunder too heavy to be carried off by the hand.

“Get up, mistress, as fast as you can,” said Cherry-Nob, as the driver, a lad of about

eighteen, pulled up close beside them. Or stay; you had better wrap the boy's cloak about you first—hand it over, Tom,—it will help to hide your fine toggery if any traveller should cross us on the road this moonlight night, and save us a mort of ugly questions.”

CHAPTER III.

If you fail honour here
Never presume to serve her any more ;
Bid farewell to the integrity of arms,
And the honourable name of soldier
Fall from you like a shiver'd wreath of laurel
By thunder struck from a desertless forehead.

A FAIR QUARREL.

WHEN the plots, we have just been narrating, first came to the king's ears, he burst into a fit of virtuous indignation, such as might have well beseeemed the most moral, instead of the most dissolute, man in his dominions. It sounded oddly enough to hear Charles on the couch of Stewart, or at the toilette of Castlemaine, the one the most beloved, and

the other the most feared of his many mistresses, descanting upon the honour of his Court, and the injury it would sustain from the profligacy of two so favoured by him as Buckingham and Rochester. But, luckily for them, he was of too easy a nature to entertain so troublesome a companion as wrath for long together, and when Castlemaine, who happened just then to be friends with the culprits, from their having lampooned her rival, Stuart, sarcastically hinted some doubts as to his Court having any character he need be particularly anxious about, the witty but licentious monarch at once felt the absurdity of his taking up the cudgels in behalf of offended morals.

"We must, however, stop the mouth of this Andalusian," he said, "or she will cry Haro! and shame upon us from Paris to St. Petersburg."

"That may be easily done," answered Castlemaine; "give a hint to Clarendon that your Majesty wishes her suit may prosper for the recovery of her father's lands, and interest will keep her silent."

"Odds fish! you say well," replied the king; "the Andalusian asks no more than her right, and on the word of a king she shall have it. Chiffinch shall whisper a word from me into the chancellor's ear, that will let him know which way the land lies, and he's not the man after such a hint to be very obstinate."

"Then I have your Majesty's permission to signify your gracious pardon to both our culprits?"

"They may thank you for it," replied Charles; "and since you have so much interest with them, I trust you will so use it with Rochester that he will not lampoon me or any one I regard, for at least,—a week to come."

This was a home-thrust, for it plainly showed that the king knew full well under whose influence was written the recent lampoon upon his favourite, Stuart. But Castlemaine was too practised a courtier, and had too bold a brow, to betray that she understood his inuendo, and it was with a calm voice she replied,

"That if Rochester should be guilty of any

such baseness, he would forfeit her regard for ever."

"Heavy as the penalty is," said Charles, with a slight smile, "I much doubt if the fear of it will stay Rochester from satirising his monarch even for a single instant—it is so safe a pastime!—the king may frown upon him, but he cannot measure swords with a subject, and the earl is one who cares less for cloudy looks than for bright steel. Nevertheless," he added, in an altered tone, seeing that Castlemaine's brow reddened, and her flashing eyes gave indications of one of those storms which were the terror of his life, and which for some time had made him heartily weary of her chains, though he wanted either the courage, or the energy, to shake them off,—“nevertheless, I forgive them both at your desire, and will use my authority to make their peace with the Andalusian."

The brow of the haughty mistress cleared up again at this declaration of the king, which, she rightly guessed, he would lose no time in fulfilling, were it only for the sake of maintaining his own quiet undisturbed.

There was one, however, who had been quite overlooked by all parties in their speculations on this subject, though, even if they had consulted him, he might still have proved a stumbling block in the way of those peaceful arrangements. This was no other than the moody, and passion-stricken Alfred Trevanion. Indignation at the base conduct of Rochester and Buckingham towards the Andalusian had sunk deeply into his mind, by nature equally prompt to receive, and tenacious to retain, all such impressions, and he resolved to call both of them to a strict account. But the Earl, to whom he first sent a hostile message, was by no means disposed to fight on that or any other ground, and flatly refused his cartel, telling the bearer of it to inform him, "that he would as soon sup brimstone with the Prince of Darkness." Forced, therefore, to content himself with an internal promise of cudgeling the recusant to extremity, time and tide serving, the wrathful lover next sent a mortal defiance to Buckingham. In that quarter he was more successful; the duke, though not a little astonished at receiving such a message from the

son of a simple Cornish knight, had yet too bold a spirit to hide under the shelter of his peerage as many in his place would have done ; but, leaving the matter in the hands of his friend, Sedley, betook himself to an appointment with Castlemaine, and never gave it another thought till he was summoned to the field at day-break.

This promptitude on the part of the seconds was the more to be admired as, unlike the friends of modern duellists, they could not indulge in the safe pleasure of looking on while the principals killed each other for their amusement, much as the gladiators of old fought and bled in the Circus, for the pleasure of the Romans ; on the contrary, they were expected to take their share in the fray, and thus had frequently the mishap of being despatched by an adversary of whom they knew nothing, in a quarrel for which they cared as little.

The sky above was lightly clouded, and the air was calm and warm, a thin, white mist steaming from the earth, without rising many feet above it, when the Duke and Sedley came upon the ground appointed for the meeting.

This was one of the many open fields, which, in those days, commencing from the skirts of the Park, stretched out amongst the neighbouring villages, and, as it were, isolated the capital, instead of its being, as it now is, a mass of buildings without any definable limit.

"We are first on the ground, however," said Buckingham.

"'Tis as much as we are," replied Sedley, "for yonder, if I mistake not, comes your adversary."

He was right. While he yet spoke, Alfred emerged from the plantations about the Park, with the hurried step of one who feels a consciousness of being after his time.

"Give you good morrow, gentlemen;" he said on coming up to them, "I am here alone, rather than not keep touch with you, but I feel assured, my friend will be here in a few minutes, if I may so far tax your patience."

"You know the established custom," said the Duke; "'tis on these occasions even as at your ordinary—first come, first served—yet, if your friend will not be long,—"

—"I ask but for ten minutes," interrupted Alfred, "and then, if he comes not, I will take up with any passer-by, who is willing to help a gentleman at need ; or, failing such an one, I will stand up as best I may, against you both in single opposition."

"So be it," said the Duke, adding to his friend in a half whisper, as he turned away, "Upon my life, I pity the poor devil, but I must let out a little of this malapert blood of his—must teach him that it is not for a Cornish chough to fly at eagles."

There was nothing in the look or manner of Trevanion that gave token of his having heard this speech, so well calculated to unsheath his sword without farther ceremony. Perhaps, indeed, it escaped him, so intent was he in watching the expected appearance of his friend. But still, from some unaccountable cause, the latter came not, though the time allowed must have nearly run out, to judge from the chimes of a distant village-clock.

"I think the time is out," said Buckingham, advancing with the polite bow of a courtier,

who asks a lady to join him in the dance. And Alfred replied in the same tone,—

“Not quite, I believe; if I may trust my watch, it yet wants a minute of the time.”

“Truly,” whispered the Duke to Sedley, as he turned away again, “your duello is the only school of politeness after all; had we met in the Park, or at the ordinary, it is lots to blanks we had made wry faces at each other. But a plague upon these morning dews! my buskins are wet through already.”

“I’ll guarantee you against cold-catching,” said Sedley, “for here comes one who has a sword at his side, and vinegar enough in his aspect to promise for the ready use of it.”

The new-comer, thus described by Sedley, was dressed in black, with well-powdered wig, and trotted rather than walked, with the short bustling step peculiar to little men of great pretensions.

“Notwithstanding the vinegar you talk of,” said Buckingham, “I’ll be warrant for yon fellow that he fights with no sharper weapon than his tongue. Only hark to him.”

Though they stood at some little distance, still the lawyer—for such in truth he was—raised his voice to such a pitch on Alfred's appeal for aid, that they could distinctly hear him replying with much wrath, "Don't tell me, sir, of any thing of the kind; I live by upholding the law, not by breaking it, and would as soon commit burglary as fight a duel—though both are capital offences."

"Let me intreat you to consider that—"

"Rule refused—what have I to do with Bradshaw's windmill? let every pedlar carry his own burthen."

"Sir—sir,"—exclaimed Alfred in high chafe—"this is no time to halt, or slip the collar, when—"

"Hold your tongue, man—would you plead after the court has given sentence?—never heard of such a thing in all my practice."

"Nay, but I must and will be heard."

"Not a syllable. Urge it again, and I'll indict you for tempting me to strife and bloodshed, contrary to the peace of our Lord the King, his crown, and dignity."

Stifling a laugh at the tone and gestures of

the lawyer as he trotted off the ground, Buckingham again turned to his mortified adversary—

“I am truly sorry for your disappointment, sir, but time and tide, you know, wait for no man. Shall we to this gear?—or will you rather cry me mercy, and so leave the ground with a whole skin and unhacked rapier?”

“To the latter alternative,” replied Trevanion firmly, “I say, *no*, and would say it were you twenty against me instead of two. But yonder, I see, comes another passer-by. With your good leave I will try what mettle he is made of.”

“May he ring more soundly than his looks promise,” said the Duke, “for by my troth I am right weary of this waiting.”

Without noticing this strong hint, Alfred went up to the stranger, who proved to be no other than our old acquaintance, Cherry-Nob, abroad thus early either in his vocation, or, what was much more probable, considering the hour, he had been impelled to wander by the mere freak of a capricious temper. At first the luckless duellist hesitated about seeking

help from an ally of such questionable appearance; but he had little room for choice; he must either do so, or place himself single-handed against two of the most skilful swordsmen of the day, an alternative which a brave man might choose to decline without any impeachment of his courage.

"May I never again touch fair lip," cried Buckingham, recognizing the reformado, "if it is not that rascal, Cherry-Nob! I thought I knew his swagger, though that new cloak—it is stolen, I'll be sworn for it—made me at first doubtful,"—the cloak in fact was Rochester's, dropped by him on the eventful night already mentioned—"And see, Charles!—our Cornish chough is so innocent that he knows him not, and is actually trying to win him over for a second."

"I much doubt his success," replied Sedley, laughing. "Cherry-Nob, it is to be feared, has no more valour than is barely enough to carry through his own occasions."

"He must succeed—he shall succeed," exclaimed Buckingham; "I would not lose the

jest for more gold than I carry in my pocket. How the knave will sweat and wink, when he looks upon a naked weapon!—to rub him down with an oaken towel afterwards would actually be doing him a service.”

While this brief dialogue was going on between the Duke and Sedley, Alfred went up to the reformado and explained the necessity he had for his help, to all of which the latter listened with a face of great importance, and replied, shrugging his shoulders, “Heart o’ man! this is an awkward job, and right glad should I be to help you clout it. But here’s the mischief. I did but cudgel a young cit, on Friday last was a week, for treading on my corns, and—would you believe it?—that furbelowed ass, the Lord Mayor, who hates us young fellows of spirit, as the devil hates asafoetida, bound me over to keep the peace for a month to come in a penalty of twenty pound—you could not put off this little matter so long, could you? if so, I am your man, and let your adversary look to it.”

“Both the quarrel and your courage might get cold by the delay,” replied Alfred; “sooner

than run such a risk, I will gladly pay the forfeit."

"But, when?" said the reformado, with a knowing twinkle of his little keen eyes; "eaten bread is forgotten."

"I will pay then for my loaf before I eat it," rejoined Alfred; "here, sir, is the money."

Cherry-Nob looked wistfully at the glittering coin held out to him, but still refrained from handling it, the fear of crossing swords with Sedley or Buckingham balancing the scales pretty equally against his avarice. In fact the ass between two bundles of hay was not more doubtful to which he should incline himself. Alfred read the cause of his hesitation as plainly as if he had given words to it, and sarcastically observed, "My good friend, he that would eat the kernel must crack the nut."

"Very true, my good friend; but he that cracks the nut may chance to get the toothache for his pains, so there's a new saying for your old proverb, and one's as near to a rhyme as the other. Shall I tell you the truth? I have been reckoned indifferent brave by divers

worthy commanders, having seen some little service by sea as well as by land; but I find it is with courage as they say it is with wisdom—no man is wise at all hours, and, faith, no man is brave at all hours.”

“And if it be so,” replied Alfred; “this, I’ll be sworn for it, is none of your colder moments. There’s a glance in your eye that as surely announces a brave fury, as the lightning tells of the coming thunder.”

“Sweet sir, I must pray of you not to deceive yourself by any such poetical fancies; if I know any thing of the matter, I am just now all over in a cold sweat.”

“The sooner, then, we leave prating and set to work, the better; there’s nothing warms the blood so well, or so quickly, as a bout with sharp weapons.”

“I’m not in the vein, I tell you. I can’t fight, and I won’t fight.”

“And I say you can fight, and you shall fight—and that before your beard’s an hour older. If you draw not your sword for me, you shall draw it against me.—Choose.”

“It’s very strange that you will tempt a

poor fellow in this extraordinary way," said Cherry-Nob, casting his eyes ruefully around as if searching for the means of escape. But, apparently, not finding any, he went upon another tack—"Suppose, now—only suppose—I should suffer myself to be tempted by you into this game of sharps, and perchance get an ugly thrust, or a cut over the coxcomb, who's to pay the leach, I wonder?"

"I will take upon myself the repairs of your body," said Alfred; "or, if the damage be too great for mending, I'll give you a soldier's funeral."

"Well," replied the reformedo, drawing a long breath, very like a sigh, "you have a most persuasive way with you, it must be owned, and, since I may not do otherwise, I'll e'en pocket your gratuity. Twenty, I think you said—five—ten—fifteen—all right, sir, in the tale, and I doubt not the quality of them is no less true."

"I am no Jew, to deal in counterfeits," said Alfred, sternly. "You have your pay, and now, are you ready?"

"A moment, if you please, my good sir. I

would just say a soldier's prayer, in case of accident."

• "Let it be a brief one, then, for the morning wears apace, and we have lost too much time already."

"You are plaguy impatient, methinks; but what says the proverb?—'Hasty climbers have sudden falls—never go before your mare to market.' "

"D—n the proverb!" cried Alfred, losing all patience at these delays. "Is this a time or place for musty saws?—they are laughing at us, yonder."

"Laughing, are they? Heaven bless their jolly faces, and keep them in the merry mood till they have done with us. Passion o' my heart!—who's afraid?—there's ten times more danger in crying 'Stand!' to a fat grazier on the king's high-way than in twenty of these same scurvy duels. A fellow may have a dozen gashes scored on his skin, without being much the worse for it in the long run, but I never heard of any one getting the better of a hanging. Ugh!—it's a very ugly complaint, that same hemp-fever—a man seldom has it twice.

Besides, if I should chance to get an awkward thrust, why there 's so much money saved in wine and the other trinkets."

Waxing courageous from the mirth of his adversaries, who, he thought, could not be very bloodily disposed, being so merry, he followed Alfred to the ground with a marvellous air of defiance. And certainly they both seemed much more intent upon fun and frolic than upon that which was the avowed object of their meeting. The natural propensity of these worthies to turn every thing the seamy side out, received a keener edge than usual from the idea of a vagrant, like Cherry-Nob, coming into the lists against them," and when formally introduced to Sedley, according to the custom in such cases, as Alfred's second, the temptation to ridicule was much too strong for so professed a jester to resist it. His eyes twinkling with malicious glee, while every other feature was starched and stiffened into ludicrous gravity, he greeted his opponent with a low bow and the silent proffer of his snuff-box, first taking a pinch himself, as if to invite by his example.

The other, his gravity being yet more solemn and fantastic, if that were possible, took the offered snuff, applied it to his nose with great deliberation, and returned a salute as profound as he had received. The mischievous wit repeated his obeisance yet more ceremoniously. Cherry-Nob did the same, only infusing into it a still higher degree of unction. And thus they went on, bobbing at each other, like two porcelain Mandarins set in motion on the chimney-piece, the crafty rogue well-knowing that he never was more secure than when being laughed at. On a sudden, Sedley's frolicsome mood took another turn, and, leaving these bowings and bendings, he drew his rapier, and exclaimed—

“Shall I entreat you, sweet sir?”

“You shall command me,” replied the reformado, with a slight shiver at the sight of the naked weapon.

“Let me pray you to uncase first—not that I doubt your honour—but 'tis the custom, you know, to strip off cloak and doublet.”

“For the cloak,” said Cherry-Nob, “I am content; but I've a strange fancy to my doublet.”

"I cannot spare you the doublet; a gentleman, and a man of honour, always combats in his shirt."

"But how if the gentleman, and man of honour, has no shirt?—what then?"

"Why, then, he fights in his naked skin; 'tis so ruled by Caranza, in his 'Treatise on the Duello.' "

"'Tis plain, then, that the Signor never went out on an English May-morning, or he had at least allowed a flannel waiscoat. If a fellow escapes a poke 'in his midriff, it 's ten to one he gets the rheumatism."

"Well, then, not to endanger your health more than need be, I am content to waive this point, in defiance of the great Caranza. Off with your cloak, however, that I may carve you like a gentleman, and not send you from the field as if you had been mangled by some butcher."

This speech encreased, as no doubt it was intended to do, Cherry-Nob's trepidation and unwillingness to fight, much to the amusement of Buckingham, who had watched this absurd scene in utter forgetfulness of the more serious

business that had brought him there. Alfred, however, by no means participated in the frolic. Feeling that the ridicule lavished on his strange ally was, in some measure, a reflection upon himself, he called out loudly and angrily—

“Enough of this idle jesting. My Lord of Buckingham, draw, and defend yourself.”

Thus summoned by one whose tones and gestures showed an impatience not to be safely trifled with, the Duke hastily unsheathed his sword, and stood upon his defence. This example was as quickly followed by the seconds, and the laughing prologue seemed to be on the point of ushering in a bloody tragedy, for the furious assault commenced by Alfred, if it did not end fatally, could not fail at last of calling up a kindred feeling of bitterness in his opposite. Cherry - Nob, on his part, too, exhibited all that vehemence of courage which so frequently grows out of a keen sense of personal danger. Being by no means a contemptible swordsman, he pressed on Sedley with a vigour that demanded all his skill to parry it, and which made it a game of peril to stand solely on the defensive.

For his own safety he was compelled in turn to attack, when, from his better practice in the weapon, he would soon have brought the matter to an end, but, in making a lunge, his foot slipped upon the wet grass, and down he came with a force that sent the sword flying from his hand to the feet of his adversary. In an instant, Cherry-Nob, whose wits were quickened, instead of being dulled by his apprehensions, caught up the weapon, and, setting his foot on Sedley before he had time to rise, shouted triumphantly, "It 's a good horse that never stumbles. Cry me mercy, though, or, as I 'm a true man, you die upon the point of fox," a declaration, which he explained and enforced by tickling his throat with the point of his sword till the blood came. Finding there was no help for it, the defeated wit was fain to make a virtue of necessity, and, with a rueful attempt at mirth, begged for quarter at the hands of his fantastic conqueror.

"Man of valour, hold thy puissant arm," he cried; "I do confess myself vanquished, and yield me, rescue or no rescue, as becomes a beaten knight."

"Then, as I am in the humour to be merciful, you may get up and live awhile longer. Stand aside, though, while I go to the help of my friend yonder. Marry, he has got the mubble-fubbles, and, by his looks, should be sore bested; but every man's not born to be a Hercules, and some must be beaten that others may be valiant."

Trevanion was indeed sorely pressed, the superior skill and strength of his antagonist making it a matter of extreme difficulty for him to maintain his ground, and had not the Duke been more intent on disarming, than on slaying him, all his youthful activity had failed in carrying him from the field with life. As it was, he bled from several wounds, though each of itself was slight and unimportant, while his wrath was inflamed and his self-possession lost from seeing that, do whatever he would, he was unable to touch his opponent. At this critical moment up came the reformado, swelling with his new-found spirit of valour, and aimed a tremendous blow at the Duke's head, which, being parried, and received by the latter on his light rapier, the weapon shivered up to

the hilt as it had been glass. Closing with him, when thus defenceless, Cherry-Nob dashed him to the earth with so much violence that he rebounded from it like a tennis-ball from the racket, and then fell back again, to lie there without sense or motion, the blood all the while gushing freely from his mouth and nostrils.

“Zooks!” said Cherry - Nob, half - aloud, in some surprise at his own achievements; “I did n’t think it had been in me. Here have I put down a brace of swash-bucklers, when, till now, if the truth be told, I never could look on naked steel without winking. But, perhaps, your Cæsars, and your Alexanders, and your other great men-killers, were all of the same metal with myself; they fought because they could not help it, and won the day because fortune would have it so.”

“Is there no spring at hand?” asked Alfred, when he saw the Duke still continued on the ground without giving any visible signs of life.

“Water!” cried his ally, with a look of infinite disgust; “stand out of the way, my

friend; you neither know how to cure your man, nor kill your man, and are as little fit for a surgeon as a soldier. Heaven send me quit of you in either quality."

With this intelligible hint as to his own superiority, he drew a small case of brandy from his pocket, and, having first taken a modest sip by way of refresher after all his exertions, he set about chafing the Duke's temples, and moistening his lips, with the spirit. To all appearance the remedy was well-timed, for, in a few minutes, the patient opened his eyes and became sensible of what had happened. A farther dose, but administered internally, had the effect of setting him upon his legs, though his ears still rang, and his head went round, from the violence of his fall.

"*'Repetatur haustus,'* as the doctors say—or, in plain English, another swig, my Lord Duke"—cried the reformado, now doubly triumphant. "I remember, at the siege of what do ye call 'em, when I was blown up so high that I never thought I should get back again, but expected to tumble the other way into the

moon, the surgeons had me soused, head over heels, into a puncheon of brandy—or, stay—it was rum, for I would n't, if I could help it, tell a lie for the matter. Well, sirs; will you believe it?—by the time I had drunk myself high and dry, and it did n't take many hours, I was sound again as a roach."

But no one seemed to incline an ear either to his exploits or his medical advice, and being thus flung into the shade, he comforted himself, as best he might, by swallowing his own prescription. In truth, now that Buckingham had recovered a sufficient degree of consciousness to hear and answer, the parties, to whom he addressed himself, were too much occupied with more serious affairs to bestow any attention upon him. Sedley, who, with all his lightness, had neither rancour nor love of blood-shed in his disposition, was earnestly employed in endeavours to reconcile the disputants. But for a long time his best efforts were only listened to in sullen silence, though each party had given, and received, a life; for, if the Duke had forborne Alfred in the heat of the duel, it was equally clear he had, in turn,

been spared by him, when the reformado's blow had left him at his mercy. Both, therefore, might in reason have been expected to listen without much difficulty to the voice of the mediator. But, unfortunately, Alfred considered the original offence to be still unatoned, while on his part the Duke was beyond measure galled to think that by his very forbearance he had been placed in a position to need the mercy of one whom he looked upon as immeasurably below him. At length, however, and after much persuasion, the interference of Sedley so far reconciled them that all idea of farther hostility was abandoned, at least for the present; and they were about to quit the ground, when an event occurred that staggered Buckingham, awoke the dormant superstition of Sedley, mazed the grosser faculties of the reformado, and cast a fatal cloud over the already-darkened spirit of the luckless Alfred.

The thin white mist, which earlier in the morning floated only a little above the earth, had by this time, short as it was, so thickened and spread itself that they could distinguish nothing a few paces off, the tops even of the

tallest trees being lost to sight in the ascending vapours. While Buckingham was yet execrating the falling dews for the mischief done by them to his buskins, there came from the thickness of this cloudy tabernacle a trumpet-blast, so loud and so drear that it made the boldest of the party start as if at some superhuman summons. A second, and a third, time it was repeated, and each blast was sadder and more piercing than the one that went before.

"Bones of my fathers!" exclaimed the Duke, "the fellow, who blows that trumpet, must have lungs of the same metal as his instrument."

"Some fools now would swear he was not of the earth earthy," replied Sedley, in a tone, however, that indicated a much greater proneness to the belief than he was willing to allow—"But, hark! what's that?"

"If ever I heard a passing-bell," said Buckingham, "I hear one now, and yet there's no church within a mile of us."

"May it not be some bell in Westminster?" rejoined Alfred thoughtfully; "in certain states of the weather, they say that sound travels

farther than under ordinary circumstances."

"I recollect once in Flanders," began Cherry-Nob—when he was unceremoniously cut short by the Duke, who still stomached his defeat, and was glad of any occasion to quarrel with the cause of it—

"Hold your peace till you are spoken to, sir knave; you may chance else to sup sorrow when you least dream of such a thing."

Prudence, or, what often wears her mask, Fear, kept Cherry-Nob discreetly silent, and the attention of all was again directed to the funeral-bell, which still continued at measured intervals to send forth its deep, sullen tones from the very bosom of the mist. What was still more singular, they could hear, though indistinctly, the muffled tread of feet and the whispering of many voices, as if the fog were a curtain dividing them from the preparations for some doleful tragedy, for tragedy every one felt it must be, who had listened to those notes of warning.

"If this cursed mist would only lift for a moment," said Buckingham, "that one might see what was going on—it's safer trusting to the eyes than the ears."

The words had scarcely escaped his lips when the beams of the rising sun burst through the fog, and mingled with it, presenting, for a moderate space, a field of the palest amber, the edges of which passed off again by gradual shadowings into the common grey vapour. Through this semi-transparent medium, as through a veil, they saw, to their great astonishment, a funeral creeping along with all the usual trappings and accompaniments of that melancholy ceremonial when it belongs either to the rich or noble. But if this were a strange sight for such a time and place, it was rendered yet more extraordinary by the circumstances that attended it; the men and horses,—some more visible, and others, less so—loomed out gigantically from the fog, and, stranger still, appeared to move in air at a few paces above the ground, phenomena, which might, perhaps, be referred to natural causes, but for which the knowledge of the beholders supplied them with no satisfactory solution.

“Is this real?” cried Sedley—“or have we all drunk of the inebriating waters of the *Erigone*—or eaten of the honey that they say makes people mad?”

"Faith, I know not whether I am drunk or dreaming," replied the Duke—"or if I am myself, or any other person; but thus much I can safely swear to—the whole business passes my comprehension."

"Whether real, or only an illusion," said Alfred doubtfully, "it is not without a precedent. I have heard the Yorkshire peasant tell how he saw, at even-tide, a cavalcade on foot and on horseback passing over the highest ridge of Souter Fell, yet, when he had climbed the mountain, not a blade of grass was turned—not a vestige was left of all the heavy array he had seen marching over it."

"His eyes must have fooled him," replied Buckingham, "as ours, perhaps, are just now fooling us."

Trevanion shook his head—

"That may hardly be; the same thing was soon after witnessed by scores of the country-people, with some slight differences only in the number and actions of the shadowy array. The spectres, or whatever else they might be, marched on five abreast, with colours waving

in the wind, but their spears showing like so many dark lines, instead of reflecting the sunbeams, though just then the setting luminary glowed strongly upon the mountain. To complete the illusion, if illusion it were, a horseman would ever and anon start out from his place in the ranks, give, as it seemed, some necessary orders, and then gallop back to his station. As it grew later, the airy figures appeared more regardless of discipline, and had less the appearance of a martial host than of people riding from a market. But still the march went on with no diminution of the numbers, till at length darkness fell upon the mountaintop, and shut it out from the view of those below."

Sedley looked enquiringly at the Duke, as if expecting from the keener judgment and known infidelity of his companion a solution of this miracle—

"How say you, Buckingham?"

"That the devil may stand interpreter, as the devil no doubt it was who concocted this pretty riddle. I'll not beat my brains any more for the matter."

"Saints and martyrs!" exclaimed the poet, "what shall this mean? yon same mourners, though they stir not, grow less and less visible as the fog about them disperses."

"Follow me, gentlemen," cried Alfred, his eyes kindling, even while his face had the paleness of death upon it; "it touches us all nearly to learn the truth of this appearance."

Thus saying, he darted forward to where the spectral train had come to a stand, the others following at a rapid pace, yet still not fast enough to keep up with his speed. While they were yet several paces behind, a volume of fog curled up between them and him, as if it had been smoke driven by the wind, effectually screening for the moment all that passed in front, and when it blew off again they found him lying senseless at the foot of a blighted oak, whose rotting trunk and leafless branches seemed to hold out a melancholy warning. They looked around in surprise for the mourners, but far and wide, in the clear space about them, nothing could be seen except the cattle, that were grazing in quiet indifference, or at most lifted up their heads for an instant,

though still chewing the cud, to wonder at the intruders.

"He's a doomed man!" exclaimed Sedley, the superstition, that had slumbered in his breast under the ordinary circumstances of life, being now fully awake and active. "This same shadowy procession, that came no one knows whence, and has gone no one knows whither, betokens a violent, if not an early, death to some of us, and who bids so fair to realize the omen as he who made it his own by being the first to run after it?"

"Tales of the nursery!" replied the Duke contemptuously. "But raise up the poor devil's head before he passes away in right earnest. And do you, rascal, out with your brandy-flask again; what's good for Paul will do no harm to Peter. You see, Sedley; the good spirit works as kindly with him as it did with myself some half hour since; he revives already."

"Aye, but look!" rejoined the poet, shuddering; "there's a broad, black line ploughed upon his forehead, as if it had been scathed by fire. He's a doomed man!"

As if in answer to these words there came from the left a low growl of thunder, which a superstitious fancy might easily have construed into a ratification of the doom thus rashly pronounced; the wind, too, which had hitherto been in the south, now suddenly veered round, without the slightest warning, to the North, blowing in such short, furious gusts, that it was hardly possible to stand up against it. This was quickly followed by a still more singular phænomenon. At about half a mile from them, or somewhat less, the dust and even gravel were suddenly swept from the loose soil, and carried up into the air by a whirlwind, the mass continuing to increase, till, in height, it reached above the tallest trees. For a time this immense column remained stationary, revolving only on itself with great rapidity, but then smoke began to mingle with the dust, and fire to dart from it, now in a single flash, and now again, like several bright arrows, shot simultaneously from it into the earth.

So rapt were the two cavaliers by this spectacle, that for the time they quite forgot the lifeless body at their feet, upon whom, how-

ever, Cherry-Nob, with better feeling, was bestowing all his care and attention, though, as it seemed, to little purpose. While they yet gazed on its progress in silent wonder, the column began to move side-wise, at first slowly, but quickening its pace as it went on, till it came over a large pond, one of many left by the working of the gravel-pits. Here again it paused, drawing up the water with the action of a sea-spout, when it resumed the same onward march, and swept off every impediment in its way, trees, barns, and haystack, with the force of some mighty giant. At right angles to its course, as it still hurried on, stood an oak and a mountain-ash, about fifteen yards asunder, both growing in the hedge that formed the boundary of the meadow. The oak, a young and stout tree, full sixteen inches in the girth, it split asunder, one half falling to the ground, though it still partially held on to the other by a thin fragment, where the rent ended. The ash, which was little more than half the thickness of its rival, was torn off in the middle, and hurled to a considerable distance, as if it had been a straw, or the lightest thistle-down.

"By St. George and his dragon!" exclaimed the Duke, "but this transcends! I laughed, as a wise man might, at the tales they used to tell of the storm in Rutland, a few years since, and now we have its very copy.—Passion o' my heart, though, we are forgetting our invalid all the while—how goes it with him, man?"

"He says nothing," replied the reformado, "and that, I take it, is a bad sign in man or woman either."

"Hand me your flask, fellow—how!—quite empty? hie then, to the pond yonder—there to the right of us—and fill it with water, do you hear?—we must e'en trust to the simple element, since we can do no better."

Cherry-Nob, as we have just seen, was not altogether destitute of his good points, though he was so much at variance with the law, and off he flew at his best speed to the pool that had been pointed out to him. To his no little dismay, three corbies had established themselves on the banks, who cried most piteously on his attempting to draw the water, an omen that he found irresistible. It caused him to

theless, I will not run the chance of poisoning the poor devil with foul water if I can do better. There seem to be more ponds hereabouts."

"'Tis all of no use," said Sedley, coming up to them; "if he dies not now, nor of this blow, still his hour is not far off;—*he is a doomed man!*"

CHAPTER IV.

The wanton spring lies dallying with the earth
And pours fresh blood in her decaying veins.
Look, how the new-sapp'd branches are in child
With tender infants, how the sun draws out
And shapes their moisture into thousand forms
Of sprouting buds ; all things that show, or breathe,
Are now instaur'd.

WHAT YOU WILL.

ALTHOUGH the duel between Alfred and his
opponents had not terminated very favourably
for the latter, still it afforded the materials of
too good a story for them to keep it secret.
They used, however, the privilege of all his-
torians, in giving their own colouring to facts ;
and, while the leading features of the affair

remained without being particularly distorted, the jest, under their ingenious handling, was made to tell against the victor. Being thus buzzed about the Court, it was not long in reaching the ears of the Andalusian, who, the coquette as she undoubtedly was, could not of altogether escape a feeling of sympathy for the gallantry of her champion, and the ardour his attachment. She might even entertain something like regret that she was unable to go farther and requite his passion, which, as a woman, full of her sex's softness, she could not help admiring for its sincerity, though it failed to touch her heart; but it was hardly to be expected that she would give up herself and fortune from mere motives of gratitude or pity. One thing, however, she might do—she might abstain from feeding hopes that she never meant to realize, and not, for the mere gratification of woman's vanity, play with his passion, as the marsh-meteor sports with the traveller, luring him on with false lights, till he has lost both heart and way, and then vanishing. Thus much at least was due to one, who, despite of some ill-usage, had championed

her cause, unasked, and narrowly escaped with life from the adventure.

Reflexions of this kind rapidly chased each other through her excitable brain, as she reclined on a sofa, luxuriating with true southern enjoyment in the beams of a bright May-morning, that streamed in upon her through the open window. So brilliant was the luminary that an Englishman, used only to his own skies, would scarce have borne to look upon it for two minutes together, but eyes like hers, accustomed to the yet brighter sun of Andalusia, could claim kindred with the eagle, and gaze on it, not only without shrinking, but with an intense sensation of delight. The pleasure it excited, for the moment, called up another train of thought.

“Such a day,” she murmured, “might almost reconcile one to this land of fogs and snows—that is, if any thing could. But no; nothing can—not even the wealth and barbarous luxury of these muddy-headed islanders—these traders to the East and West, to the North and South, wherever a penny is to be got, or an advantage to be gained.

Merchants, they call themselves!—and what is a merchant?—a water-spaniel to fetch and carry from one country to another, or a usurer, who keeps all the gold, he can clutch, in the prison of his strong chest, and never lets it out but on bail and good security. And what ideas they have of the pleasures of life!—of those amusements which are meant to steal the hours from ennui, or soothe the weariness of labour! For the noble bull-fights of my dear native land, the cowardly baiting of the poor animal with dogs—it would be long ere they ventured themselves against him like the gallant Andalusian—or, yet worse, the setting a cry of curs upon the gallant horse, and worrying him to death. What a language, too!—the hissing of serpents,—the same, no doubt, that the devil used, when he whispered Eve in Paradise, and which, if the snake-tribe have not lost the gift of speech, they talk even in the present day. And then, what music!—what dancing!—dancing, do they call it? 'tis the shuffle of human monsters on two left legs—music? Oh that they could hear the meanest peasant of my own Andalusia, when

he touches the guitar with untaught hand, or pours the melody of the *tirana** into the ears of his listening mistress. Yet, what am I talking of? the ass loves his own braying better than the song of the nightingale—the dog howls at the moon in very hatred of her brightness.”

Any one, who at this moment had seen the Andalusian for the first time, the bitterest scorn playing about her beautiful lips, and all but distorting them, would have rather likened her to a *Vashti* than to one of those gentle and sunny-spirits that, in youth at least, we love to fancy a connecting link between humanity and the angels. It was, however, no part of her character to be in any one humour for long together, an April sky being not more variable than her mind and features. Her thoughts reverted to Alfred as suddenly, and with as little reason as they had been diverted from him by the glancing of the sun-beams, when at the same instant her eye was caught by her

* This word “*tirana*,” like “*seguidilla*” and “*bolero*,” is used by the Spaniards to designate a peculiar class of national music. In sweetness it far exceeds them both.

own image, reflected in the pier-glass between the windows. In a mood half playful, half earnest, she held up her finger at the shadow, rebuking it as if it had been the real substance of another.

“Ah, cara mia, you ’re a sad coquette—not that I much blame you for it, either; most pretty women are so, and she, who is not, only forfeits her sex’s charter, to be called a fool. But, pr’ythee, spare this young fellow, who has perilled life to avenge your wrongs, and come off victoriously from the trial. Though you love him not, he ’s better worth than to be treated like the rest of them—plagued and pleased, cooled and heated, kept off and pulled on, till, what with tears, smiles, flatteries, and angers, the poor fool knows not whether he ’s in Paradise, or the other place. Ah, cara, cara! if there be hearts of stone, there are hearts of glass, too,—fragile things, that, if roughly handled, are well nigh sure to break, and his, I much fear me, is one of the frailer sort. Mark you that, saucy one; and, for once, be as good-natured as—you need not titter so—as people say you are handsome.”

In this agreeable amusement of talking to her own image in the glass—an amusement, by the bye, more frequently practised than acknowledged, by the young and handsome—she was interrupted by the entrance of her Spanish servant, who came to announce a visitor.

“Has your visitor no name, Perez?”

“He calls himself Captain Jacob Snee, but to my mind, Señora, he looks more the tavern-bully than the soldier.”

“I never heard of him before. And what is the creature like that owns a name so horrid?—what for a man is he?”

“He’s an ill-favoured knave, with ferret eyes, a bird’s beak for a nose, and a shock of fiery red hair, that must have been thrice dyed in cochineal, for nothing of the kind ever grew naturally on mortal head.”

“You are the very best of painters, honest Perez; there’s no mistaking who it is that has been sitting to you for his portrait, though I have seen the blessed original but once. Show him up directly.”

“Did I hear you aright, Señora? show this fellow up?”

"Quite right, Perez."

"You are my mistress, Señora, and therefore—"

—"And therefore you 'll do my bidding, without more words," interrupted Maria, sharply. "Nay, my old friend, look not so blank for the matter," she added, in a milder voice, seeing that the faithful follower of her fortunes from childhood upwards appeared not a little disconcerted at a tone so unusual to her, at least when speaking to himself; "I spoke more harshly than I meant, so think no more of it; but show me in this fiery-headed stranger, this Captain Jacob Snee—what a name for a man that calls himself a Christian!—to be sure, though, he is only a heretic."

The old servitor bowed lowly, left the room, though with no good grace, and in a few minutes returned, ushering in the redoubtable Cherry-Nob, into whose looks and manners a double portion of impudent swagger had been infused by his recent triumph. Nothing could exceed the ludicrous air of self-satisfaction with which he made his entrance, or the half-

crazy, familiar nod that he gave to the Andalusian, plumping himself into a chair, unasked, and addressing her as if she had been an old acquaintance.

“Give you good day, Señora! give you good day! Baxo los manos, as we used to say in the Low Countries, when your countrymen turned tail, and ran away.”

The spirit of the haughty Andalusian was kindled in an instant, and her eyes actually seemed to flash living fire, as she replied to this unlucky salutation—

“Know you where you are, fellow? or do you take this house for a tavern, and me for one of your petticoat-companions, that you presume thus saucily?—Up, from that chair, sirrah; none shall sit here till they are asked to do so,”—the abashed captain stumbled up from his seat with awkward alacrity.—“’Tis well, sir knave; but doff your cap as becomes a man, although he were a king, in the presence of a lady,”—the captain obeyed the word of command as soon as given.—“And now that the ass has put off the lion’s skin, and stands confessed for the brute he is, let me know

your business? what is it brings you here?"

"A fool's errand, and no other," rejoined the captain, growing desperate at a reception which appeared to bode no good to his expectations.

"Not so, Captain, since such you are pleased to dub yourself"—

"I have fought in the Low Countries, and earned the name," said the Captain, hastily breaking in upon this unfinished inuendo. "Believe it as you list, Señora, but I have trailed the puissant pike under divers commanders of name and fame, and done more good service than many who—"

"Hold—that will do," cried the Andalusian, waving her hand with every sign of loathing, as a sick man repels the unwelcome dose that is being pressed upon him—"that will do; I want not to hear you twice rout your defeated, and twice kill your slain; I will rather call you general, if captain is not rank enough for your ambition. But, as touching your errand, you did me foul wrong, when you termed it a foolish one—it was indeed foolishly delivered, and by a fool. Where is the pledge I left with you?"

This cavalier way of acknowledging his services, considerably blanked Cherry-Nob's newly-acquired spirit, and when he took off the diamond-ring and presented it to her, it was with such a ludicrous expression of doubt and dolour at parting with the precious deposit that her haughty mood gave way at once to her keen perception of the ridiculous, and she burst into an uncontrollable fit of laughter—

“What! you are afraid lest I should play the Jewess with you?—receive back the ring, and deny the promised equivalent? You shall have no cause to say so, captain; here is my purse, take it, and think more truly of the donor.”

Cherry-Nob clutched the purse held out to him eagerly enough, yet still he hesitated to pouch it, a reluctance, which no one, who knew him, would for a moment think of attributing to his modesty; the fact was, he had some doubts of its being precisely the stipulated sum, and he kept weighing it in his hand to get, if possible, at that interesting piece of knowledge; unable, however, to satisfy himself by these means, he at last ventured

to ask, but in one of his blindest and most conciliatory tones, "Had I not better count the coin? you may, perchance, have given more than you bargained for, and, if so, one would like,—yes, one like to know how the matter stands."

The gold was soon reckoned. There were five-and-twenty pieces, being five more than she had promised him, and these he half held out to her, his hand trembling all the while lest they should be accepted. Much to his surprise, and more to his vexation, she actually did take them, but it was only to fling them again to the ground, saying, at the same time, with a smile of ineffable scorn,—“There, captain, they are yours, if you can stoop to pick them up.”

Stoop indeed!—Cherry-Nob plumped down on all-fours to gather up the scattered coin, and, having safely pouched them, he said on rising, as if to excuse his own act to himself, “Gold is gold; but, were it only silver, nothing can come amiss from the hands of a fair lady.”

“Take that, then!” said the Andalusian,

giving him so sound a box on the ear that it tingled for half an hour afterwards; "take that for supposing Maria de los Dolores would forfeit her plighted word for a few base pieces. And now, if you have sense enough, tell me something of this affair of yesterday; I have heard, though I can scarcely believe it, that you measured swords with Sedley."

"You may add, Sefiora, when you tell the tale, with Buckingham too, and beat them both, though I will not deny that they carried themselves like stout cavaliers. The Duke, I must say for him, is a pretty swordsman—a very pretty swordsman—I love to breathe myself, now and then, with one of his sort; he puts a man to it, whereas half of those who carry bilbo at their side are afraid, or ignorant how to use him; there 's no pleasure in fighting with them—none at all."

"Well, if you have done talking of yourself, let me next hear of Master Trevanion. He was hurt, and dangerously, I think, they said."

"Not he indeed—no more than any barber's 'prentice would cure with a bit of lint and a

half-penny's worth of spermaceti ; how the deuce should he have taken any serious damage with me for his second ? No, no ; I never leave time for accidents ; my way is,—one—two—three—and the third hits my opponent in the button, as sure as he has a head on his shoulders—not that I care to boast of such matters ; 'tis only having a little more skill, and a little more courage, than my neighbours—nothing in the world else."

"Master Trevanion was not hurt, then ?"

"Much more frightened than hurt, I fancy—that is, frightened by the vision, and the corbies, and the other devilries of the morning ; for, as touching his valour in mere mortal matters, I have little fault to find with him ; his hand is ready enough to his sword, though, of course, he somewhat lacks the eye and nerve of one who has fought in the Low Countries ; nevertheless he is—"

But, before he could finish this qualified eulogy, in came the object of it, his face pale and haggard from the events of the day previous. He did not even seem to recognize Cherry-Nob, and that worthy, with the same

instinctive apprehension of peril that the wild fowl have of the coming tempest long before it really bursts, retreated with much speed and quietness, there being something in the wild eye and excited manner of Alfred that he had no fancy to encounter.

The first impulse of the Andalusian was, as usual, to indulge in the mockeries, for which his visionary adventures afforded so fair a ground, for her superstition was precisely of the kind that laughs at the credulity of others, even when itself is most credulous; but, on observing the death-like paleness of his cheek and brow, the jeer died away upon her lips, and she addressed him in a tone of sympathy that sounded as grateful to his ears as the babble of water to the pilgrim in the sandy desert.

“Holy Virgin! you have been more grievously wounded than that false braggart would acknowledge. Why are you abroad thus early? it was foolishly—nay, it was unkindly done, for you may well suppose,”—and a faint smile played upon her lips, as she said it,—“that even I, hard-hearted as they say I am, must

yet have some sympathy with the wounds of my gallant champion."

"I have no wounds to signify," replied Alfred—"mere scratches, such as the leach might give, to let out the feverish blood; but, were they ten times deeper, the smart of them would be welcome since they were taken in your service."

"Out of what book of knight-errantry did you borrow that pretty speech, for of a verity it never came from the degenerate brain of any modern?—Psha! I'm in my old lunes again—but 'tis all your fault, who will tease my ear, and vex my spirit with these thrice-worn insipidities of knaves and coxcombs. Listen to me, Alfred—Mr. Trevanion, I would say"—

"Not so," interrupted Alfred passionately; "still call me Alfred, for so long as I hear that name from your lips there is still hope—I am not quite undone."

"This is intolerable," said the Andalusian; "here am I for once in the humour to talk sense, and the good inclination is baffled and made nought, because you choose to answer in language filched from some crazy romancer,

or from some mad poet, who is scarcely less ridiculous."

"I would I knew where to find language that might better please you," replied Alfred.

"There again!" said Dolores pettishly—"another page, and a very dull one too, from the book of compliments. Let me hear no more of it, for I have no mind to laugh at you if I can help it. Now do n't flash your eyes and prepare for a valiant passion; I meant no offence, but, on the contrary, all kindness, though, if I had, I am not a man to be challenged, nor a dog to be beaten."

"Is this creature an angel, or a devil?" murmured Alfred involuntarily.

"Oh, a devil, certainly," replied the Andalusian—"but a merry one, like him of Edmon-ton, or the Friar of the Rushes, so take heed you do n't provoke me into showing how mad I can be, or I may lead you a wild dance

Over hill, over dale,
Thorough bush, thorough briar,
Over path, over pale,
Thorough flood, thorough fire—

Oh, I 'm as mischievous in the frolic mood as

my cousin, Robin Goodfellow, and as likely to train my followers into a quagmire. But now let me ask how it was you came to such a mortal feud with his Grace of Buckingham?"

"Can you, indeed, be at a loss for the cause? Oh, Maria! how little do you understand this heart!"

"It may be so, for I profess not to read riddles, and most hearts are riddles—as much so to their owners as to others. But, setting aside these nice points of philosophy, as too abstruse for my dull brain, have the goodness to tell me why you fought with Buckingham. You are silent—I must then suppose, at the risk of self-flattery, that it was on my account. In this, Alfred, you have done wrong both to yourself and me; to yourself, because you have rashly perilled a life given to you for nobler ends,—for the weal of your country, for your private honour; and me you have wronged, in that your action, rash and foolish as it was, has made me your debtor for more than I can pay without"—she hesitated, and her voice faltered, while a tear, unbidden, started to her eyes—"without the sacrifice of my own happiness."

"Then leave the debt unpaid," replied Alfred mournfully; "or, rather, think not that you can ever be my debtor; the best service I could render, even though power equalled inclination, were no more than a fitting homage to so much excellence."

"You have a noble nature," said the Andalusian—"I see it now—far other than belongs to the tribe of gallants, those painted wasps that buz about a woman as bees hang upon the flowers, to rifle their best fragrance and desert them. I must, therefore, speak out yet more plainly, and crush the false hope, which, I can read in that reply, is only beaten down,—it is my shame that, in mere waywardness of mood, I ever cried aim to it; but that is past, and I will now be as frank as you are noble. Alfred, I respect, I honour you, but—I love you not—I never can love you except as a sister loves a brother. Be then Maria's brother, and I promise you as fond a sister as though we had been twinned of the same dear mother."

Alfred had, only a minute before, endured, with some degree of firmness, the same death-

blow to his hopes, when couched in less decisive language, for, perhaps, even when most seeming to deny them, they had still lingered in his breast; but this frank avowal left no farther room for self-delusion; he, at once, abandoned himself to despair, and the expression that came over his face, in consequence, was such as to defy the power of words to paint it; it was an absolute darkening of every feature, as if a shadow were upon them.

“She has said it!” he exclaimed, clasping his hands, and appealing with uplifted hands to Heaven—“with her own tongue she has said it! Who now shall cast upon me the reproach of sin if—if I do what I dare not utter?”

“This is mere Midsummer madness,” rejoined the Andalusian, impatiently. “For shame, for shame; be yourself; be a man; were I less your debtor for the affair of yesterday, I could not choose but laugh in your face outright.”

Alfred started back as if he had been stung by an adder—

"Gracious Heaven ! has this woman indeed a heart?"

"Yes, Alfred; she has; a kind, and a loving one, too; kinder, and more loving, perhaps, than those who, by their looks and speech, would seem to think that affection is never worthy of the name till it is crazy, and plays as many wild pranks as Don Quixote did in the Sierra. But enough of this folly now, and for ever."

"Now, and for ever !" repeated Alfred.

"Aye, but you must not say it with that gloomy face, as if you were about to cool your passion in the Thames, or to bid the world farewell by means of a pistol-bullet. Go home rather, quarrel with your valet, beat your house-dog, serve a process of ejectment against the innocent cat, and, when you have thus expended the black humours that are disturbing your bile, dress yourself for my ball to-morrow night, and let me see you here—an altered man."

"Your ball?" echoed Alfred.

"Certainly; have the meeting with Buckingham, and the air-formed funeral they talk

so much of, left no place in your memory for any thing beside? When we last parted in the Mulberry Gardens, I craved the favour of your company for to-morrow evening, and methinks 'tis not so long since that you should have forgotten it. For your own sake, however, bear it in mind, now, or they will say you shame to meet them."

"And who are they that will dare to say, or imagine, any thing of the kind?" said Alfred, fiercely.

"Who but the Duke and Rochester? the king will have me reconciled to his worthy favourites, and brings them here to-morrow night, with some other guests — Castlemaine and Stuart, for instance—whose presence I could well dispense with. But the price of this act of grace has been paid before-hand, for I knew Charles too well to give him credit; he has spoken to Clarendon in my behalf, and, with the royal spur in his flanks, the lord of the woolsack promises to quit his usual snail's pace and gallop to a decision. So, now that you have all the news, farewell till night—*brother!*"

She held out her hand to him with one of those bewitching smiles which women, in the

pride of youth and beauty, know so well how to put on, when any purpose is to be carried. Alfred, however, hesitated.

"How!" she said, with a slight flush of irritation on her cheek: "do you refuse a friend's hand? or do you hold me unworthy of the name?"

"I hold you," he cried, "for an angel—for the seraph, who keeps the key of that Paradise, from which I am shut out for ever—aye, for ever!"

In the excitement of the moment, he caught her in his arms, printed a burning kiss upon her lips, and dashed out of the room like one possessed, leaving her well nigh breathless, and reddening with indignation at his violence.

"If this man be not mad," she said, on recovering breath sufficient to give utterance to her thoughts, "if this man be not mad—mad as the wildest hare of March—then is there no such thing as insanity. Never before did I see him so much beside himself, though, at the best of times, he is more than enough fantastic in his his humours. And yet—poor fellow!—I have been much to blame in this matter."

It was said by the Greek of old, that ‘man had two souls—the one being good, and persuading to goodness, the other bad, and inciting to evil — and that these two principles, like the opposing powers of light and darkness, were for ever contending in him for the mastery.’ Certainly the notion seemed to be verified in the Andalusian, the milder spirit inciting her, even at some sacrifice of her own feelings, to save one so worthy from the probable effects of his despair; but the mortal genius, whose province it is to tempt and to destroy, gained, as he too frequently does, the upper hand in the struggle, and the thought was abandoned almost as soon as entertained—“Why should I,” said she to herself, “take the thorn from his foot to plant it my own? there would be little reason in such a nact, and as little gratitude should I reap from it. I had done far better though, had I left him to his dreams, for this sudden waking of him seems only to have added to his delirium, and, whereas he was only parcel-mad before, he is now altogether frantic.

She had, indeed, much better have left him

to his dreams, for, in destroying hope, she had done much as the Prince of the fairy-tale did, when, on entering the cave where his mistress was imprisoned, he broke the talisman, and thereby called up the evil genius, who held her in his power. But such is ever the inevitable force of circumstances, each event being indissolubly linked to the one preceding it, while all imagine that their foresight can, in a measure, if not entirely, shape and regulate the future. The duel, beyond a doubt, induced that kindlier state of mind which made her anxious to disabuse him of an error so fatal to his repose, and this very truth it was that led to the most deplorable results.

It was the morning of the ball. Totally unconscious of the clouds that were gathering about the future, and tempted by the peculiar brilliance of the day, she descended to the narrow strip of ground that divided her dwelling from the Thames, for at that time the houses in the Strand, instead of being, as now, one continuous row, straggled along the river-side, either quite isolated, or in detached groups, with occasionally a plot of

garden. Upon opening the terrace-door, her ears were saluted with the shouts of a mob from the muddy space below, that had been left by the retiring tide; oaths, cries, and laughter being so equally blended that it was hard to say whether a broil was going on, or a merry-making. But to understand the cause of all this uproar it will be necessary to travel back a little, and follow for awhile the fortunes of the valiant captain—the redoutable Cherry-Nob.

CHAPTER V.

Every man's aim

Is to hit pleasure, only 'tis chang'd in name ;
That's all the difference. Are kings tyrants ? blood
Is then their pleasure : thirst they after wars ?
Ambition tickles them.

IF THIS BE NOT A GOOD PLAY, THE DEVIL'S IN IT.

THE bounty of the Andalusian had filled Cherry-Nob's pouch to an unusual extent, and, however greedy he might be of gain, the avarice, or the prudence, that keeps fast hold of what it has once got, was by no means in his nature. With a light heart and a swaggering step,—for his late rebuff had acted on him only as the weight does upon the spring, bending it down for a moment that it may fly back the

straighter when the pressure is removed,—he set out for the places he usually resorted to, when, as now, there was a flood-tide in his pocket. The principal of these were St. Paul's, in which, strange to say, business and pleasure mingled with religion, as the money-changers erst swarmed in the temple of the Jews—the Bear-Garden, where not only rugged Bruin, but even the noble horse, was baited to death by dogs of peculiar strength and fierceness—and, though last, not least, the ordinary. Indeed the tavern might be said to hold the first place in his affections, for here it was that the gallants of the second head drank right worshipfully, ate most impudently, and diced most swearingly, and here he had spent the greater part of the day, much to his satisfaction. Amidst such congenial occupations, the hours had flown with unwonted rapidity, the only fault he could find being that these merry companions had carried off with them the greater part of the gold bestowed upon him by the Andalusian. This visible ebbing in his purse, to say nothing of his instinctive dread of the broils which always grew more frequent

and more dangerous as the night advanced, induced him to think of retreating at an earlier hour than he otherwise would have done. Already the dicers and revellers were becoming as much heated by their own noise as by play and wine, and more than one fray had been commenced, which only needed a little more exaltation on the part of the disputants to bring it to a fatal conclusion. Forth, therefore, he sallied, preceded by a link-boy, a common appendage in those days, and just then by no means a superfluous luxury, considering that while the full moon was covered from sight by a mass of clouds, his own vision was scarcely less obscured by the strength and quantity of his potations.

His lodging, to which he was now going, lay on the outskirts of Alsatia, but, long before he reached that very desirable goal, he was brought to a stand by a stream of people crossing his way, as they poured out from a building on his right, the river being to the left of him. From their short, grey cloaks and their steeple-crowned hats, though dimly seen in the obscurity of the night, it was easy to tell they were

Puritans, coming from a conventicle, this hour and place being chosen that they might the better escape notice, for persecution had again begun to lift up its head, and sharp laws had been passed against non-conformists of all conditions, though they were not always so rigorously enforced. The existence, however, of such enactments made it a matter of prudence to do nothing that might unnecessarily attract attention, and thus they indulged in their own worship, not openly indeed, but yet without absolute concealment.

On seeing this multitude of godly professors, Cherry - Nob began to have dim visions of some especial advantage to be derived from them; he might inform against this illegal meeting, and get a portion of the imposed mulct for his pains, for though the law ever kept to herself the lion's share of all such penalties, she yet could not refuse a slight fragment to her jackalls, if it were only to keep them staunch in their vocation. Not thinking it necessary to explain his kind intention to the objects of it, he bade the link-boy join the crowd, as if belonging to them, while he drew

himself close up in a niche, or rather arch, formed by what had originally been a doorway. Here, as he was completely in the shade, and the night still continued dark, he hoped to escape observation, and to all appearance, he succeeded; at least no one noticed him either by word or action, the Puritans being much too busy, as they walked on, in discussing sundry high and mysterious points in the discourse they had just been hearing from one of the most fanatical of their preachers. In a short time he found himself alone in the deserted street.

“How shall I manage for a light?” he muttered to himself, stealing out of his hiding-place, when he saw the coast clear. “I should like much to know what sort of a hole these puritanical dogs kennel in. As I’m an honest man and hate drunkenness, I can’t, for the life of me, recollect any praying-shop hereabouts—to be sure, there’s an odd buzzing in my brain-pan, and I could almost swear I was turned into a windmill—though I can’t well understand how that should be, either.”

At this instant, the moon, who will at times

shine for rogues as well as for honest men, thought proper to fling aside her veil, and bestow all the light of her countenance upon the suspected building. From the sudden contrast with the preceding darkness, all around seemed well-nigh as bright as at mid-day, except where the projections and overhanging eaves of the houses intercepted the flood of light and cast a shadow on the ground below. He could now see that the supposed chapel much more resembled a warehouse for goods landed from the near river, and such, probably, had been its original destination, while underneath ran a vault, which corresponded in size with the storey above, and had all the external show of a wine-cellar. Between the two floors appeared in large letters, "COB COLEBY," but without any other addition, as if the name alone sufficiently explained the occupation of its owner—unless, indeed, the lines below were intended, like the epitaph on the tomb of the licentiate Pedro Garcias, to indicate what was within to those who had wit enough to take the hint. The captain read them over sedulously, commenting

and expounding to himself as he went along.

“ ‘ There’s a spirit above, and a spirit below—’

“ Oh, aye, a spirit above proof; and a spirit below proof—such as they cheat us with at the ordinary, and be damned to them—mere Thames water in disguise—it will take a man of any mettle a whole morning to get decently drunk with it.

‘ A spirit of joy, and a spirit of woe,’

“ That’s plain enough; the one I suppose is right good stuff, without a head-ache in a whole hogshead of it; and the other is your fiery potation, that hisses and seethes in a fellow’s brain-pan as if the devil were using it for his kitchen-cauldron, and stewing some damned soul in it—just what I have been swallowing to-day, ’till my head goes round like a wind-mill.

‘ The spirit above is a spirit divine,’

“ Never heard of such a liquor ’till this minute; they talk indeed, of Brannt-wein in the Low Countries, but Di—vine!—what a

plague can it mean? it surely isn't Dutch for rum?

'And the spirit below is the spirit of wine.'

"Is it, by Gosh? then that's the spirit for me. But how the deuce shall I come at him? you may conjure up black and grey diablo-tins, as many as you choose, with a few hard words, and a dram, or so, of fumigation, but your spirit of wine is a bottle-imp, and there's no uncorking him but by letting him hear the chink of your gold and silver. To be sure one may—humph! ha!"

The purport of this exclamation that rang so doubtfully might be inferred from his drawing forth a bunch of keys, and mentally comparing their size with the padlock upon the vault door.

"Humph! ha!" he again ejaculated, though in a more confident key, that gave to his words quite another meaning. "There's no one near, so I'll just try for curiosity—nothing more—whether any of my keys will fit that same padlock. Steady, boy,—steady. A slow foot is a sure foot."

This was no unnecessary caution, had he been in a state to profit by it, the steps that led to the vault being so steep, and moreover so worn away in many places, that it required some little care to descend them. But there is an especial providence, they say, for drunkards, who walk safely where sober men stumble, and thus it chanced that the captain, somewhat to his own surprise, found his way in safety to the bottom. Upon trying his keys, though with an unsteady hand, he soon found one to fit the padlock, the best locks in those days being very different from the complications of wards and tumblers invented by modern ingenuity. The door, thus opened, admitted him into a vault of moderate size, festooned with cobwebs, and furnished with divers jolly-looking butts, that were ranged up and down, and along the walls, barely leaving room for any one to pass amongst them. A spile, a gimblet for boring, and a tin vessel holding about a pint, lay upon the stones, and with such appliances so invitingly ready to his hand, it may be supposed he lost little time in testing the qualities of this goodly

company. Unluckily, his taste was so fastidious, or his judgment so nicely critical, that in the attempt to do justice to all parties, he drank himself into a trance-like torpor, that was broken by visions, much more painfully real than the dreams of common sleep. One moment his head seemed to be an anvil, whereon a dozen blacksmiths were hammering furiously at a bar of red-hot iron, the blows jarring his skull till it was ready to split to pieces, and the glowing metal burning into the very brain. Then again, he was a gible-pie, in which character the baker thrust him into his oven, where by a singular lack of skill he was left to burn 'till he became little better than a cinder. As the wine-fever in his brain cooled down towards the morning, the painful nature of his visions somewhat abated, and they took, besides, a more connected form. He dreamt it was the last day, but his imagination had, even in sleep, all the earthy grossness that belonged to his waking hours, and the shadows called up by his brain were ludicrous instead of being terrible. How should it have been otherwise? the sublime is to a great degree in

ourselves and according to our own natures, external objects doing little more than kindle the sleeping element within us, as the spark ignites the gunpowder.

At the sound of the trumpet the tombs opened, the graves swelled and burst, and the bones therein imprisoned were set at liberty to seek their fellows. The first to answer the summons were the soldiers, who, supposing it to sound a charge, started up in a mighty bustle, and marched forward as to an assault, but, finding how matters really stood, they would fain have retreated to their tombs again; these, however, were closed against them, and, though they swore full lustily, Death, who kept the keys, would have nothing more to say to them, and Time, to whom they appealed for help, shook his head, and pointed to his broken scythe and hour-glass on the earth beside him. While they were yet in the hottest of the dispute, the misers awoke at the hurly-burly; they peeped out, all trembling and aghast, for in the first hurry of waking up from their long sleep, they fancied their graves had been their treasure-chambers, and that these sounds an-

nounced a general storm and pillage; they were greatly comforted on finding they were only likely to be damned. With the delay that belongs to all law proceedings, the lawyers made their appearance last, and even then they were the most troublesome of any who responded to the trumpet. Their legal brains had lost none of their usual propensity to quirk and quibble, and, before the blast had well ceased to sound, they had picked out more flaws in the summons than in any Old Bailey indictment. Some entered their caveats, others stood upon their writs of Habeas Corpus, others, again, declared they would file a bill of discovery, many would take out a summons to show cause, and not a few would traverse till next term. All, however, were unanimously of opinion (being more than they ever were in their lives) that the whole process was illegal in point of form, the trumpet having been held in the left hand, and not in the right. Demurrers, writs, and summonses of all kinds flew about in the air, as thick as hail-stones, and the hubbub grew so violent that it awoke the dreamer. Raising

up his head from his stone-pillow he began to look about him, though, as yet, only half-conscious of where he was, or how he had managed to get there. He was still rubbing his eyes for information, when the sound of voices without, at the top of the steps, did as much as a pailful of cold water could have effected in bringing him back to his senses.

"What doth this portend, friend Much?" said one voice; "the padlock hath left the staple, and the door of the vault standeth open! Of a verity my inward man is disquieted, and my spirit forebodeth evil."

"Thieves," replied a gruff voice in reply; "thieves, I'll be sworn—"

"Nay, but swear not, friend Much; it may damage thine own soul, but it will not help us to catch the robber; neither will it bring back the precious liquor, which, doubtless, he hath abstracted."

"More fire in the bed-straw," muttered the captain, peeping out from behind the door at these unwelcome visitors. "Six of them, as I'm a sinner! and one (he should be a miller by his dusty doublet) looks as surly as a

butcher's dog. What an unlucky rascal you are, captain!—Tyburn is the inn you will bring up at, and how will you like that, captain?—how will you like dangling at the end of a rope with a loop in it, captain?—not a loop-hole to creep out of, but a loop to hold you fast and tight—a slippery knot that will put an end to your slippery tricks. You cannot go less, captain; your Puritan ever bites hardest when he whines softest.”

While Cherry-Nob was thus earnestly lecturing himself on the very fair prospect he had of being hanged, the Puritans had descended. Much, the miller, led the van, having, immediately behind him, Cob Coleby himself, and his pew-fellow, Hugh, the blacksmith, with about half a dozen of their cronies, all of whom had willingly yielded him precedence on such an occasion. Stout as he was, though, the moment he espied the captain, he fell back a few paces upon his supporters, well nigh upsetting those in his rear, and brandishing his quarter-staff, like one who equally feared to give or receive the first blow.

“Dang thee, keep back!” he cried; “if you

do'nt stand still where you be, I'll fetch you a rap on the mazzard."

To stand still was not exactly in the captain's power, for his legs were still unsteady from his over-night's indulgence; but, with the fear of the miller's staff before his eyes, he did the best he could, and seated himself, with folded arms, astride a wine-cask, exclaiming at the same time, with his usual assurance—

"By Bacchus—though it 's but a Heathen oath—you must wonder how I came here."

At this 'exclamation, which carried with it nothing very menacing either in the tone or the substance, Cob ventured to thrust his head over the miller's shoulder, a position which their relative heights enabled him to take up with no less ease than comfort to his troubled spirit. Here, as from a strong-hold, he could parley safely with the enemy, and with much more freedom of speech than he would have deemed prudent without such a post of vantage.

"Wonder at thy being here!" he said, repeating his words; "yea, greatly do I marvel thereat, as much, peradventure, as thou wilt

presently marvel when thy hands have become acquainted with the gyves, and thy back with the beadle's whip."

Muddled as he still was with the effects of of the wine, Cherry-Nob was yet fully conscious of his state, and endeavoured to gain time, that he might collect his scattered wits, and frame some decent pretext for being caught there.

"Stay a bit," he said; "you are much too hasty to be a parish-clerk. If I have made a small fault in the matter of the wine-cup, it was not at your expense."

"Of a verity," replied the Puritan, "thou art a hardened liar, and the truth is not in thee. For what purpose hast thou broken into the strong-hold of my wines, save to rob me of that which I may truly call mine own, seeing that I have laid down the price thereof in gold and silver?"

"I rob you!" said Cherry-Nob, with the most unblushing effrontery; "take heed to what you say, Master Coleby—I think your name be Coleby—measure your words better, when you speak of a man-of-war, one who

hath trailed the puissant pike under grave Maurice, or, gods and fiends—humph!—ha!”

The finish of this formidable menace died away in his throat in sundry indistinct gurglings. But if it alarmed the Puritan, it had no such effect on his friend, the miller; he flourished his staff over his head and laughed scornfully as he said, “Out with it, man; let us hear what you will do, and then mayhap I may let you know what I’ll do.”

“No offence, jolly miller — none in the world,” replied Cherry-Nob, dexterously shifting his ground, that he felt growing unsteady beneath his feet, and veering about to a new quarter with all the ease of a well-oiled weathercock—“I was a thought too hasty—’tis in the blood of us soldiers, and comes of smelling so much gunpowder—but all friends, now; all friends now.”

“Friends?” retorted the suspicious miller; “to my mind, you are one of those who are better lost than found; a man may read hemp in your face and be no great clerk either.”

“Thou speakest well, honest Much,” said the Puritan with an approving nod. “Of a

verity, man, my mind misgives me that thy heart and thy tongue are no relations."

"Twin brothers, by this light—twin brothers. For my part, I'm plain Dunstable; I can't cog and flatter as some do, and cry 'sweet sir' when I mean 'foul stinkard;' not I, by my valour."

"Nevertheless I still fear me thou art but a false knave. All this time thou tellest us not how it chanches we find thee here among my wine-casks?"

"Why, as you say,—by chance,—and a queer chance it was too. You shall know all about it if you'll only lend me your ears for a brace of minutes or so; I promise you 'tis a tale as well worth listening to as any that was ever sung in ballad, or cried about in a broad-sheet. Faith, I shouldn't wonder if you saw it in print shortly, with a picture of myself in the title-page, and a label coming, like a worm, out of my mouth, on which all men may read, who can read, 'Behold the stout Captain Snee!'"

"Who was hanged at Tyburn," added the Puritan, piecing out the sentence with a grim smile; verily such is like to be thy end,

according to the wise proverb, which sayeth

With the jail, who'll not be mended,
With the gallows shall be ended.

Nathless, proceed thou meanwhile with thy marvellous relation, making it as brief as thy nature will permit, for surely my soul rejoiceth not in such unprofitable discourse."

"And hark you, knave," said Much; "don't think to cozen us with any of your thieves' lies, such as they coin in the commonwealth of Newgate to pass upon judge and jury when a rascal's brought to trial. I haven't been a miller these twenty years and more not to know bran from good flour."

"It shall be all as true as the gospel of Nicodemus," replied the unblushing Captain; "what should I go about telling you lies for? —when I can gain nothing by it."

But we must not do him, or his story, so much wrong as to bring it in at the fag-end of a chapter, and huddle it up like a postscript of some forgotten matter.

CHAPTER VI.

Burn the witch ! the witch ! the witch !

FORD.

"I WAS walking late in the fields last night," began the Captain, "just by way of cooler after a dish of pickled herrings and a single cup of mulled sack—not a drop more, as I'm a Christian—and amused myself with looking at the moon, and marvelling how the man and dog, we see in it, had ever got there, when I heard the sound of voices, behind a hedge, a few paces in front of me. Who the plague, thought I to myself, can these folks be, and what are they about?—nothing good, I'll be

sworn, whoever they are, or they would n't be here at this hour of night. So I crept forward as warily as we used to steal upon an ambuscade in the Low Countries, and—what do you think I saw?"

"We shall guess better when you have told us," answered the miller gruffly.

"Why I saw about a score of women"—

"Harlots of a verity," snuffled the Puritan.

"I can say nothing as to that," modestly replied the Captain; "but the most of them had beards on their chins, and such puckers in their dry, wizzened faces!—passion o' my heart! a flea would have broken his neck if he had tried to leap such wrinkles. There they squatted on their hams in a circle, each with a broom-stick at her side, ready saddled and bridled, so that one might easily guess what was in the wind. In the middle of the ring were some half dozen black cats, and as I live by bread—to say nothing of malt and hops—it was with them that the beldames were talking."

Here the wily captain paused, and looked round to see what effect his tale was producing

on his auditors. The blacksmith stared with eyes enlarged to double their usual size, the stout miller was visibly moved, though he still looked somewhat doubtful, and the Puritan jumbled together half a dozen prayers at the same time, a medley which, if sound could be compared to sight, resembled nothing so much as a piece of patch-work. The others showed, each after his own fashion, the deep interest they took in a tale so much in harmony with the established belief in witches, and the crafty narrator, finding he had touched the right string, was thereby encouraged to give such a loose to his fancy as, had they been a jot less blinded by superstition, must inevitably have betrayed him. Never since the days of Delrio and Bodin had credulity been so taxed by the impudence of a fertile fancy.

“Well, my masters”—he continued—“the crones did not spy me out, being that I was hid from them by the hedge, so they talked and talked, and their four-footed gallants mew-ed and mew-ed, and they all seemed in such high glee—especially one huge fellow, who was beginning to be grey, and had a pipe in his

mouth, such as I have often seen in Germany"—

"Mercy on me!" ejaculated the Puritan.

"Fact, as I hope to 'scape the gallows," replied the veracious captain; "he hawked and spat about him like any Christian."

"The tom-cat did?" said the miller, utterly astounded.

"The tom-cat," replied the unblushing captain; "but I should tell you—for, truth is truth—it wasn't tobacco that the old boy smoked; to my thinking, it smelt like *assa-fœtida*; more by token, I had much ado to keep myself from sneezing, and then I should have been in a pretty mess, for those gentlemen in the fur robes had confoundedly long claws, and looked as if they would like nothing better than to use them."

"Cats smoke!—cats spit like Christians!" muttered the miller, who, being just one degree less superstitious than his neighbours, was not able to gulp down this tale half as glibly as it was delivered. His disbelief, however, met with no encouragement from any quarter, while it even scandalized the stricter orthodoxy of the Puritan.

"Doubtless," he said, "those cats were not cats, but fiends in the shape of them. Wert thou not still, friend Much, in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity, thou wouldst know that Satan doth often lend power unto his servants to take upon them what forms they please, when evil may be better wrought thereby, and that they more especially rejoice in the feline shape."

"You have hit the white," said the captain ; "of course they were devils in disguise, for who ever heard of a downright real cat's talking and smoking? if any fellow told me such a thing, I should say, he lied in his throat!"— Oh, captain, captain! let no one call you fool after this—"Well, sirs, when the old boy had finished his meerschaum, he jumped up on his hind legs with a sudden start, as if he had been sitting all the while on nettles, and had just found it out. I have seen a fellow, when hit with a bullet, cut exactly such a caper.—'Time for business,' quothed he, and he knocked the pipe on his thumb-nail to get rid of the ashes, when, body o' me, it turned all at once into a cremona! it seemed, though, to

have got terribly scorched under his fingers, for it was charred all over, and as black as any of the coal that is just now coming into fashion. And what do you think he did for a fiddlestick?"

His auditors all protested themselves unable to solve so high a mystery, and with one voice begged of him to go on.

"Why, sirs," continued the captain, who began to revel in these creations of his fancy, "he uncurled about a yard or so of his own tail—it seemed stiff as any wire—and shaped it into a capital bow, with which he gave three grand scrapes by way of prelude. Hereupon the other cats stood up on their hind legs, and toddled to their partners—they could not walk conveniently on two feet, you know—when, each giving a paw to the witch right and left of him, they began to dance in a wide circle about the fiddler. At first this dance was slow enough to be a minuet of old women, whose legs, of course, did not like to be hurried, but by degrees it grew faster—faster—faster—till, soul of St. Vitus! they whirled round at a rate that quite dizzied me to look at them.

And then, too, there was such a springing and flinging ! — such a rare showing of garters !”

“Talk not of these profane enticements,” groaned the Puritan, his eye, however, being strangely at variance with his words ; “it is not good for the spirit that the ear should hearken thereunto.”

“If you think so much of only hearing of these things, what would you have said had you have seen them as I did ?” retorted the captain, who was now upon his mettle, and, like a racer at full gallop, must needs shoot beyond the goal. “The witches were not all old, I promise you ; there were some young ones amongst the troop of sycoraxes, buxom dames, with black eyes and cherry lips, who were much too handsome to be sops in the devil’s dripping-pan. Let it pass, though, since we none of us can mend the matter ; witches they are, and witches they must remain.”

“No doubt, no doubt,” said the Puritan. “But, on with thy tale, friend. What followed next ?”

“In the midst of this twirling and whirling, an old owl who had been peeping at them from his oak, and was set there, I suspect, as a watchman for the party, whooped three times. The fiddler took the hint, and suddenly stinted in his playing, at the same time crying out—but what the plague am I about? it will never do to repeat what he said; ’tis the witch’s travelling charm when they take the air at night on their broomsticks, and at the first syllable, for aught I know, we might all be whisked off bodily to Lapland or Norway, or some such place; the devil does not like, any more than a midwife, to be called up for nothing.”

Master Coleby raised both eyes and hands in horror at the supposition. Even the bold miller had at last caught the infection, and believed with as strong a faith as his neighbours.

“Not but what I’ll venture on it, if any of you wish to try the charm,” said the astute captain, well aware that there was little chance of his offer being accepted.

“By no means,” hastily exclaimed the

Puritan, answering for those about him as well as for himself; "neither I, nor any of my friends here, may endure such practices; 'tis a tampering with things forbidden, a trafficking with the Evil One; and evilly might it end with us should we give way to it."

"Not unlikely," replied the Captain; "I'm sure I found no good come of mumbling their devil's masses."

"There now!" cried the miller; "did n't I say so? did n't I warn you all that this fellow was as much worth a rope as a thief's worth a halter? You marked him, neighbour Coleby? he has let out that he dealt with witches, and used the spells he learnt from them."

"A pestilence upon thee, miller," retorted the Captain; "would you measure other men's corn by your own bushel? that's the sure way to give them less than they bargained for."

"Peace, I pray ye both," interposed the Puritan; "and do thou, honest friend, go on with thy relation; it concerneth us much, as good Christians, to search into the truth of this matter."

"Where was I?" resumed the Captain;

“the clapper of his mill has put me out. Oh, I have it. As I was saying, the old fellow muttered a something, which I do n’t care to repeat, lest worse should come of it, when,—whisk! they all mounted into the air upon their broom-sticks, with such a whizzing and fizzing!—mayhap you have heard a flock of wild geese rising on the wing? well, it was just that sort of noise, only a deal louder. Somehow,—I think it was the devil moved me to it—I must needs say the charm after them, little dreaming of any mischief; but scarcely had I got out the last syllable than the Old One, taking me at my word, blew a whirlwind at me, as hot,—aye as hot as ever blast came from your furnace, Master Blacksmith.”

“You saw him then?” asked Cob, his hair actually standing on end with horror.

“Of course I did,” rejoined the modest narrator—“there he stood in the moonlight, puffing away might and main, till his cheeks were like to crack. At first I thought he intended making a broil of me for his supper, but presently the wind took me off my legs, and, as I mounted upwards and felt the night-air, I

began to get somewhat cooler. On then I went, spinning round as if I had been a top, whipt about by some lubberly school-boy, and in this way I was twirled and whirled into your cellar, Master Coleby. My head's still dizzy with such tee-totum work, and this giddiness it was that made you fancy I had cut leg or so—got dagged, I mean,—by supping more wine than water, when, as I hope to be saved, the single cup of mulled sack you wot of was all I took to flavour my pickled herrings. Well, sirs; I found the witches had got here before me, and were so busy pegging away at the wine-casks that they did not seem inclined to notice me, the less so perhaps in that I had been flung into a corner of the vault, and there was little light to see by. All, I dare say, would now have gone well with me, if I could only have kept my tongue to myself; but, a plague upon it, I must needs be chattering. The truth is, they made such abominably wry faces over their liquor, for all the world as if they had been grinning through a horse-collar, that I could not help crying out, 'Holloa, dames; what are you about there?

I'm blest, but you'll turn all the wine in the cellar downright sour if you pull such faces as those !'—Gosh ! I wish you could have seen the old beldames when I spoke to them in this fashion ; I have heard before now of people looking blue, but curse me if they didn't turn pea-green. At the same moment there came a loud clap of thunder, that made the vault shake again, and a hand, that I couldn't see, fetched me such a blow on the chops that down I tumbled. There I lay, for I do n't know how long, and there most likely I should be still lying, if you had n't chanced by good luck to pay a visit to your wine-butts."

"A strange tale," said the miller doubtfully ; "but we all know the miles between hell and earth are shorter than those between London and St. Albans, and so mayhap the devils may now and then make holiday, and if so—"

"There stands one of the witches !" cried Cherry-Nob interrupting him, and determined to put an end to all doubts by a clincher ;—
"she there, at the vault-door, in the scarlet hood and Cardinal."

At these words forth darted the blacksmith,

quite forgetting, in his anxiety to seize the supposed witch, the probable danger that would attend such an undertaking if she had only one half the power usually attributed to bel-dames so perilously gifted. Presently he returned, dragging in a woman, who for the last five minutes had been curiously peeping at the open door to learn the cause that had collected this numerous and noisy conclave in a wine-cellar.

“The Jewess, Rachael!” cried Much, recognising in the prisoner our old acquaintance; and, immediately turning to the Captain, he hastily added, “I believe your tale, friend, in spite of your face; there’s my hand on it.”

“Rachael?” echoed Master Cob, in whose estimation one of her tribe needed no previous inquiry to condemn her—“Rachael! As I am a Christian man, who never gave short measure to any but the ungodly, I much doubt if this be not the same that has been bruited far and wide for a dealer in poisons—one, who by her unhallowed drugs consumes the living, even as the Aceldama, the field of blood, devours the dead, doing only in a short week corruption’s

work of years and anticipating the worm. Aroynt thee, witch! aroynt thee. Lo! I spit over my right shoulder, and defy thee."

"And I spit at you for a fool," said the indignant Jewess; "there's more peril in one blockhead than in a score of the wisest witches that ever mounted broomstick."

"Ho! ho!" cried the miller; "you 'd deny your pranks, would you?—aye, and I dare say, you could swear a hole through an iron pot, if that would help you; but credit me, Mistress, you have no such fools to deal with; I have seen, myself, how you dipt a broom-sprig in water, and sprinkled a dog with it, whereupon the devil entered the poor dumb beast, and he ran away howling, till the boys stoned him to death."

"And I," said the blacksmith, "have seen her cast a flint-stone over her shoulder to the West, and what surer sign of a witch would any man need, who reads his bible?"

"How sayest thou, woman?" cried the Puritan, turning to the Jewess; "art thou guilty of the thing which these God-fearing men charge upon thee?—art thou a witch?"

"Would that I were, for your sake," replied the Jewess; "I'd plague you, I'd torment you, be sure of that. Or, better still; would that I carried the poison of the basilisk in my eyes to blast you. Unhand me, dog,"—this was addressed to Hugh, the blacksmith, who held her with no gentle grasp—"unhand me, I say, or it shall be all the worse for you."

"Slacken not her bonds, I beseech thee, good Hugh," exclaimed the Puritan, falling back from her in great alarm. "Lo! she girdeth up her loins and maketh herself strong for mischief, even as the tiger croucheth and maketh ready to spring upon his prey."

"Grant me patience!" cried the Jewess. "Why, thou ass of Issachar, can'st thou not comprehend that, if I were the witch you take me for, I would not endure for a minute—no, not for the tenth part of a minute—the restraint of your hand, or, what's worse to bear, the folly of your tongue?"

The Puritan, at no time very firm of purpose, was completely taken aback by these shrewish demonstrations, and turned, as he

usually did in cases of difficulty, to the stout miller for advice and comfort.

"How shall we deal with this woman, friend Much?—you see she hath made hard her face against the truth, and refuseth to confess her abominations. Shall we deliver her over to the magistrate, even unto the man they call Lord Mayor, that he may sit upon her in judgment?"

"Not with my advice," said the miller, "for he 's little better than an infidel, and is more like to flout us than to punish her."

"Weigh her against the church-bible," said Hugh; "that 's the surest way to try a witch."

"I say, swim her," cried Much; "strip her stark naked, tie her right thumb to her left toe, and her left thumb to her right toe, and then fling her into deep water; if she sink not, she 's as true a witch as ever gave suck to the devil."

"A righteous motion," said the Puritan; "even as thou sayest, so let it be done."

"We'll all lend a hand," said the blacksmith. "Come on, my jolly mates, and strike while the iron 's hot; I warrant me, the witch

whizzes and fizzes on touching the cold water, like any horse-shoe, red from the anvil."

By this time a pretty numerous rabble had collected in the street before the vault, and no sooner had it got abroad amongst them that a supposed witch was to be tried by water, than the intention was welcomed with shouts by all, except some few old women, who felt that it touched the guild, of which they were unwilling members. Their objections, however, more whispered among themselves, than uttered for the benefit of those about them, were little attended to, and Rachael was carried off to the river-side, her cries and struggles affording much that sort of amusement to the spectators which the same enlightened class would derive in the present day from hunting down a dog under the pretence of its insanity. But, for the moment, these humane intentions were defeated by an obstacle they had not reckoned on in their hurry, namely, the loose mud, which just here, had collected to the depth of several feet below the bank, as the most forward of the party were not long in discovering; at the first plunge, down they sank to

their waists, and the others, taught by their mishap, set off for a more convenient, that is, a more gravelly, spot, on the other side of Alsatia.

By this delay the crowd had increased, and even organized its disorder, so as to have the appearance of a party riding the Skimmington, which, being one of the allowed abuses of the day, we may the better understand how it was they carried out their frolic without interruption. The unlucky Rachael had been tied down in a chair, borne upon four stout shoulders, while before her went several flag-bearers, the said flags being nothing more than divers coloured petticoats, forcibly borrowed for the nonce, no leave had, or asked, from the shop of a Jew-clothesman. These were fastened to the end of long poles, some of which had been voluntarily supplied by the barbers in the neighbourhood, and in other cases taken, like the petticoats, without the ceremony of consent. Behind came a strong body of ragged men, and no less ragged boys, making a most harmonious music with tongs, kettles, frying-pans, and other similar utensils, which, if the

object had been to collect a swarm of bees, would have been singularly in character. So great was the din, and so completely, as well as agreeably, was the attention of all occupied, that no one observed the absence of Cherry-Nob, who, having achieved his own purpose in raising the storm, had wisely slunk off, lest by any chance the rabble should come at the truth, and be led to turn the edge of their wrath upon its proper object.

It was the clamour of these idlers, who had at last found a spot suited to their purpose, on the shore a little below her house, that had attracted the notice of the Andalusian on coming out into her garden. All that she could at first make out was that the people were dragging a female to the water, a ceremony against which the victim protested, not only by yells and execrations, but by a vigorous use of teeth, nails, and feet.

"In the name of the Blessed Virgin, what are you doing yonder?" called out Maria from the garden-bank.

"Swimming a witch! swimming a witch!" shouted a score of voices at the same time in reply.

"A murrain on the bitch-wolf's fangs!" cried the blacksmith, shaking his hand as if he had just dropped a live coal; "may I never again handle hammer, if she hasn't well might bit off half a finger."

"Out with your flem, man, and draw her blood before she does you a worse mischief," counselled one of his near neighbours, falling back himself, however, so as to keep out of the reach of peril. "You are never safe from a witch 'till you have drawn her blood."

"Nay," replied the smith, "I've got a sprig of four-leaved clover in my cap, and a holly-twig in my girdle, so let her devil do his worst, —hang him, foul collier!"

"And I," said Cob, "have St. John's wort and vervain in my pouch, being that I never go abroad without these auxiliars. Nevertheless, though the spirit be stout and prompt to encounter Satan and all his imps, the body is not so willing."

"Stand out of the way, then," cried the miller; "since she will not go quietly to the water, let me fetch her a rap with my staff; 'tis a true bit of mountain-ash, and will drive

the devil out of her, I warrant me, be he never so obstinate.”

Suiting the action to the word, he aimed a blow at the Jewess, which, though it did not take the full effect intended, yet razed the scalp, and well nigh tore her ear off. Strong in her power of endurance, even beyond the usual fortitude of her tribe, the poor creature scorned to utter a cry, but with a trembling hand wiped away the blood that began to stream down into her eyes, and lifted up her head as if to invoke Heaven's vengeance on her oppressors. This action revealed to the astonished Andalusian the features of Rachael, which till then had been in a great measure concealed by her long black hair, that, having got unbound in the struggle, hung dishevelled about her face.

“Rachael!” she exclaimed. “And why do I see you thus? what have you—what can you, have done to merit such cruel treatment at the hands of these people?”

At the sound of Maria's well-known voice, the Jewess started, and seemed at once to be recalled to her usual habits, the passive cou-

rage, that had supported her when all looked hopeless, by no means making her indifferent to the chance of safety, when it opened upon her thus unexpectedly.

“In the name of the God whom we both worship!” she exclaimed—“by the bones of your father!—by the honour of your mother!—save me—save me from these sons of Belial.”

“Swim her! swim her!” cried Much, indignant at this reflexion upon his Christianity, and the cry was readily taken up by a hundred voices, not less from the love of noise than the love of mischief. So outrageous waxed the tumult that it was many minutes before the Andalusian could make herself heard, and then not ’till by her earnest gestures she had obtained a partial cessation of the uproar, the curiosity of some granting what most assuredly none would have yielded from compassion.

“Hold!—I entreat—I implore you!” she cried, forgetting in the better feelings of the moment the late practices of the wretched Jewess against herself. “Draw not upon your heads the certain vengeance that belongs to the blood-spiller both in this world and the next.

I will answer for this woman's innocence, if the sin of witchcraft be all you can charge upon her.

"Ho! ho! ho!" shouted the blacksmith; "ka me, ka thee—one hand washes the other—the papist voucheth for the Jewess."

"And who, I marvel, will vouch for the papist?" said Ceb, with a sardonic smile.

"The Old One, to be sure," replied the miller; "'twill be no more than neighbourly in him, seeing that they sup out of the same porridge-pot."

The hot blood of the Andalusian could endure no more; her eyes literally flashed fire at these taunts, and, drawing the long, pointed knife, which she constantly wore in the Spanish fashion at her girdle, she bounded with a light foot from the garden-bank to the very spot where the leaders of the mob were congregated. There is always something in the glance of one determined and indifferent to consequences that is sure at once to be recognized by feeble spirits and to overawe them, and such was the relation between Maria and the noisy rabble. The greater part of those

who had hitherto been most forward, shrunk back immediately, while even the miller and his crony, Hugh, though bold fellows enough in their own way and with their own weapons, were startled at the unaccustomed sight of steel in a resolute hand, to which it was evidently familiar. The former, indeed, held up his rowan-staff, but more, it seemed, with a view of self-defence if attacked, than with any idea of provoking a conflict with his frail, but dangerous opposite. Not so, however, was it with those who, being the farthest off, were the safest from any chance of danger, whether of steel or of witchery; they were scandalized at this lack of courage in their companions, and began to murmur at a backwardness that threatened to deprive them of their promised amusement, much as they would have done in a cock-pit, had the birds refused to fight. Cries were heard from all parts, of reproach or encouragement, according to the humour of the spectator.

“Shame on thee, stout miller!—wilt cry craven to a woman?” — “Why, how now, blacksmith?—can’st swing an English hammer

with that huge goll of thine, and dost skulk from a Spanish bodkin?"—"Have at her with thy cudgel, Much!"—"Close with her, Master Cob, and wrest that bit of iron from her."

"Aye, aye," muttered the blacksmith; "it 's mighty fine talking! 'Bell the cat,' quothed Mistress Mouse to her companions, 'and then we shall know when puss is coming.'"

"You are no less wise than valiant," replied the Andalusian, unable, even in a scene like this, to suppress her usual sarcastic spirit, though it was still doubtful whether the affray might not terminate in bloodshed. "But come; let there be peace between us, for the which, as it 's much too good a thing to be given for nothing, I will pay you a fair price, and in ready coin. Draw off your ban-dogs, then;—I can see there 's not one of them will dare so much as growl, if you wise men will only hold up a finger to forbid it—and, instead of dipping a Jewess in the Thames, which will be but cold work, take this purse at my hands, and all make yourselves warm and merry at the nearest ale-house, where they sell good liquor, and dole it out in honest measure."

A proposal of this kind was much too congenial with the tastes of most present to be questioned, at least by any except the Puritan and his more immediate cronies, and they found themselves in so decided a minority that they were glad to abandon their first intention. With the fickle temper of mobs in general, the Andalusian, who, but a minute before, had been the subject of their coarsest invectives, was now hailed with shouts of "Hurrah for the handsome Spaniard!—hurrah for Maria de los Dolores!—may she soon get a husband to her bed, and a child to her cradle!"

"And be a merry widow in three months after!" squeaked out a thin treble from the crowd; a wish that was followed by peals of laughter, amidst which the whole body set off for the ale-house with a wonderful feeling of unanimity. The Puritan, indeed, groaned aloud at this backsliding, this yielding up of the good cause to Satan, as he phrased it, but neither he nor his two ingles thought proper to carry on their purpose against the Jewess. Not a littlr chap-fallen at the result, they slowly followed the shouting renegades, and in a few

minutes Rachael and her protectress were left undisputed masters of the field of battle.

"You have done me foul wrong," said the latter, when all else were out of hearing, and I did not think to forgive—Sancta Maria! I do not forgive it—I never can. But what then? this is no time to talk of such things, when your wounds cry aloud for help, and life itself may be in peril. Jewess though you be, you have still the same body to feel pain, and, let us hope, the same soul to be lost or saved as the rest of us; and little credit would it be to a Christian woman were she to tamely look on while you perished for lack of aid, like a masterless dog in the high-way. Come in with me."

The Jewess shook her head, while in her face might be seen a conflict of passions not easily defined; shame, there certainly was not, but with a strong expression of bodily pain was mingled something like a show of regret, the better feeling of early life contending with the acquired evil of many years.

"Lady," she said, after a brief struggle with herself, "*now* I cannot enter your dwelling—it

may be I shall never again enter it—not, so help me the God of Abraham and of Isaac, as I am ungrateful for life saved, or that I harbour anger for your rebuke; for what else have I deserved at your hands save to drink gall and eat the bread of bitterness?—no, lady; it is your benefits, all unmerited as they are, that fall on my wounded spirit, as salt on the fresh stripes of the newly-scourged felon. I am wrath that I cannot hate you as I hate others; I am wrath that you should waken in me the feelings of a time, when I was far other than what you now see me—feelings, which bring remorse, not repentance, and which, to my present habits, are intolerable, while yet they cannot alter them.”

“Rachael!” cried the astonished Andalusian; “I never heard you talk thus before.”

“It is my shame that you hear me talk so now; such words might well have become Rachael, the pure, the young, the beautiful—Rachael, the honoured child of the honoured merchant, the proud and wealthy Manuel of London; but they are folly, and worse than folly, in the mouth of Rachael the seduced,

Rachael the cast-away, whose pride and pleasure it is to tempt others of her sex, till they fall as she has fallen, and are abandoned as she has been abandoned.

"God help thee, woman!" exclaimed the Andalusian; "this is a fearful state of mind."

"Aye, is it not?—but it is n't the less true. Satan tempts man, because he would not be alone in his sin or in its expiation, and to her who has lost all, there is but one hope, one comfort—that of seeing, or of making, others like herself. And now, lady," she added, scorn and malice lending a frightful expression to her yet handsome features, "now you know me as I truly am; you see me without the mask that I wear before the world—do you still wish me for an inmate?"

The Andalusian shuddered and hesitated at first, but the compassion, natural to her sex, and which sits so gracefully on woman, even when allied to weakness, overcame the whispers of prudence. She repeated her invitation in a voice that was gentle almost to tears—

"Come in with me, Rachael."

"May the God of Israel bless and reward

you for those words," exclaimed the Jewess, "for I never can. But what I may, I will do. No court-libertine, be he earl, or duke, or crowned king, shall harm you while Rachael lives, and has an eye to see, or an ear to hearken out their villanies. Once more may *He*, who delivered the fathers of our people from bondage, stretch his right hand over you, and protect you!"

With this farewell, she turned away, heedless of all expostulations, and even of entreaties that she would remain, and slowly walked on in the direction of Alsatia, though from her tottering steps it was evidently a matter of difficulty, if not of considerable pain also. Curiosity, and perhaps a kindlier feeling, kept the Andalusian for some time a watcher, till at length the tide, rising upon the muddy flat, compelled her to re-ascend into the garden and place herself beyond the reach of the approaching waters.

CHAPTER VII.

I am ashamed to speak it, but, when life
Lies at the stake, I can not think her woman
That will not talk something unreasonably
To hazard saving of it.

KING AND NO KING.

IMPRESSIONS of any kind, as we have seen, seldom dwelt long upon the mind of the Andalusian, and Rachael was forgotten all the sooner that she was now called upon by Perez to admire the preparations for the evening's fete, which had been made under his superintendence. She stood in the centre of a long room, the sides of which might be almost said to be of glass, so profusely were they covered with mirrors, let into the walls and seeming to

form a part of them. Between these, the broad pilasters were decorated with variegated lamps, not yet lit, amidst a profusion of gilded ornaments in the shape of small bells, that hung about the saloon like drops from the ears of some female savage. In niches and upon half a dozen japanned pedestals the eye was greeted with monstrous bonzes and grinning mandarins, fashioned of the finest porcelain, and brilliant with colours, such as no European manufacturer could at that time have attempted to supply, but in shape, uncouth and extravagant, as if they had been conceived during the dreams of delirium or the drunkenness of opium. In fact, the genius of Perez had exhausted itself in endeavours to transform a semi-gothic saloon, as nearly as he possibly could, into a Chinese temple ; but, as he could neither take out the Gothic windows with their fret-work and stained glass, nor remove the groined ceiling, the two together made a compound much more striking than it was tasteful.

At this strange display, the better taste and sarcastic spirit of his mistress could scarcely

refrain from bursting forth into a criticism that would certainly have made the Major-domo's ears tingle for a month afterwards. Like other artists, he was more than enough conceited of his own doings, and now stood watching her face with all the jealousy of a painter whose work is under judgment, and who, while he solicits the opinion of his friends, is in reality expecting their applauses. But she could not find in her heart to wound the old man's vanity by any decided expressions of discontent, and the slight equivocal, that lurked in her words, was tempered by a kindly smile, which spoke good will, if not approbation.

"Very gay, and very fine, Perez. You have hit the fancy of these islanders to a nicety, and have more than rivalled a Guildhall pageant, saving always the giants, who ought to have been the guardians of your temple. But I have no leisure for admiration ; the day is well nigh gone, and, if I make not the more haste, our guests will be here before I am ready to receive them. Bid Iñez attend me in my dressing-room."

She left the saloon with a slow step, a change

coming over her spirit, even while she smiled at the old man's absurdities. No nun at vesper, or matin, service ever knelt with a sadder face than she now wore, when, placing herself before a glass, she unbound her long, raven tresses, and prepared for the business of the toilette.

"I know not how it is," she said to her tire-woman, who like herself was an Andalusian—"I know not how it is, *Iñez*, but on the sudden a strange feeling has come over me. I cannot describe it—but have you never observed the sullen stillness just before the outbreak of a storm?—how the very air has seemed oppressed and your bosom has felt tightened as you breathed it, till you have almost wished the storm would burst at once that you might get rid of the sensations belonging to the horrid calm?"

"Dear lady," replied the tire-woman, "this looks like the first approach of fever; 'twere well you took counsel of the leech before worse comes of it."

"No, *Iñez*; no; I feel not any bodily ailment; 'tis my spirit that sinks, and is darkened

as if a shadow were upon it. I could e'en sit me down, and weep, without knowing why, but—but that it's all folly, and laughing becomes me better. So, let us to the toilette ; the evening wears apace."

The task of dressing a lady of fashion was certainly not less minute in those days than in our own, and, long before Iñez had finished the toilette of her beautiful mistress, she was interrupted in her vocation by a gentle tapping at the door. In answer to her impatient demand of "Who knocks?" the voice of Perez was heard, announcing his name, and excusing the intrusion, as far as they could understand him, but the one half of what he said was intercepted by three or four inches of good stout oak.

"Go and see what the silly old creature wants," said the Andalusian ; "he must be crazy sure to plague me at a moment like this. But I suppose some accident has happened to his Chinese arrangements ; either the lamps won't burn, or a mirror has got broken, or he has taken a fancy into his head to metamorphose the servants into living mandarins, and they have sense enough to be refractory."

In compliance with these injunctions, Iñez opened the door just wide enough to hear and be heard, acting as a sort of vocal telegraph between the two parties, and reporting the questions and replies from one to the other.

"Lady Trevanion requests the favour of an interview, though but for a few moments," said the telegraph.

"Lady Trevanion? Alfred's mother, I suppose, by the name. What on earth can she want at such a time, being, as she is, a perfect stranger?—Did Perez say I was dressing for the ball this evening, and could n't see any one?"

Again the telegraph went to work, repeating the question, and in due time conveying the Major-domo's reply that all this and much more had been said, but that the lady still persisted in her demand, urging it was a matter of life and death, whereupon he, the said Major-domo, had deemed it right to take his mistress' pleasure on the subject, before shutting the door in the face of the applicant.

"Life and death!" re-echoed the Andalusian, in visible alarm; "did I not tell you so,

Íñez? Did I not say that something would happen before the night had come and gone? Fly, yourself, directly, and bring up Lady Trevanion to me—here, in my dressing-room.”

The female, who in consequence of these injunctions soon made her appearance, was simply though elegantly dressed, and had evidently long since passed the prime of life, though her features might still be called handsome. Her face exhibited all the marks of acute recent suffering, being thin and pale to a degree, while by the trembling of her eyelids, and a convulsive twitching about the mouth, it was plain she with difficulty refrained from bursting into a flood of tears. Still, even under the influence of grief, so little favourable in general to the expression of dignity, those noble features retained their naturally commanding character, and had that in them which, for the moment at least, subdued the usual petulance of the Andalusian. Dismissing Íñez by a mute sign, she apologized for receiving her visitor in a dressing-room, pleading the lateness of the hour, that hardly left her time for the necessary duties of the toilette.

"It is for me," replied the matron in a voice of singular melody—"it is for me to crave pardon, not for you, señora. Yet my fault is such that, while I confess it, I cannot wish it were amended. A few hours only, and—Oh! my God! if I prevail not with you, I may have to mourn over the corse of my youngest and my dearest one."

"Sancta Maria!" exclaimed Dolores; "what has happened now?"

"Much might have happened," replied Lady Trevanion, "but that a merciful Providence interposed to turn aside the blow. Within these two hours my unhappy boy attempted his own life, and had not a blessed chance brought me in time to stay his hand, the suicide would at this moment have been answering for his crime before the judgment-seat of his Creator."

"This is dreadful!" murmured the Andalusian, crossing herself repeatedly. "Blessed be the name of the saints, who saved him from a sin so grievous. Yet surely it was not—"

She broke off, and hesitated as if about to

say more than a modest estimate of herself would warrant, the colour slightly rising to cheek and brow in conscious rebuke of what at least to others might seem an idle vanity. Lady Trevanion hastened to fill up the imperfect sentence.

“For your love, you would say, and you are right—quite right—he can no more live without you than the oak can flourish without the rain and the sunshine. The vigilance of affection may perhaps defend the suicide against himself, but what can stay the mind’s influence upon the body? a troubled spirit kills full surely as the sword or aconite.”

“I grieve,” replied Maria, “for your son’s madness—it is really nothing better;—but, surely, you will not ask of me to heal him at the price of my own happiness? I cannot return his frantic passion, and he well knows it, having heard as much from my own lips. Why then will he persist in this persecution? for persecution it is, as bad—nay, ten times worse than to be hunted by the court-libertines. I can make sport to myself of their

follies, but I cannot laugh at a tale like yours and told as you have told it."

"You cannot return his passion?" said Lady Trevanion, eagerly catching at the only words that seemed to admit of answer. "Oh, believe it not; the heart is deceitful above all things, ever nearest to love when it seems most indifferent, and to hatred when it burns the most with passion. And why should you not reflect back some portion of the light and warmth he throws on you? he is in the spring of life, of honourable repute, accomplished in every art that may become a gentleman, and handsome enough to be admired of many, who would joyfully accept the hand that you reject, only to arm it against itself."

"Would to Heaven," cried Maria pettishly, "that he would wed one of these same admiring dames, and leave me in peace and quiet."

"I said the same half an hour ago, señora; having seen you, I say it no longer."

The manner, more even than the flattery, of this reply, won from Maria a slight smile of gratification, and her visitor, animated by this

gleam of sunshine, pursued her point with increasing energy.

“What is it that a woman—a reasonable woman—seeks in marriage?—Rank? from me, my son derives the blood of chiefs and nobles, for such were my fathers when Wales was Wales, and flourished in independence. Is it courage to defend, and fortune to maintain, a bride? Alfred has already shown that in your cause he fears not to draw his sword against the bravest. And, for wealth, he can from his own lands assure you a dowry, such as a duke would not shame to offer, or a duchess to accept.”

“My dear Lady Trevanion — forgive the hasty phrase; it escaped my lips inadvertently—”

“Nay, make no apology for that which rather deserves my thanks; you could not use a word more pleasing to my ear, unless you called me—mother.”

“I allow all you say,” continued Maria, without noticing this invitation to a nearer familiarity; “I grant that, with his advantages, natural no less than acquired, Alfred is one

who may make a reasonable woman happy ; but I," she added with a smile, "do not pretend to any such character ; I am a wayward, petted child of fortune, who ever follow the impulses of my own fancy, and, as ill-luck will have it, that fancy does not speak in favour of your son."

"I should be silent now," said Lady Trevanion, "but I am a mother, and in that word all is said. Rank, it seems, cannot allure you, wealth cannot dazzle you. That is much for one so young and beautiful. But, young and beautiful as you are, Old Age, when you least expect such a visitor, will knock at your door, and with him will come wrinkles, and neglect, and sour-eyed discontent lamenting vainly for the past and shrinking hopelessly from the future. The tenderest flower that blows has scarcely a briefer spring than is assigned to beauty. Wrong not yourself, then ; be more just to the bounty of nature, who has not made you the bright and lovely thing you are, that you should wither into life's winter without blessing and being blest."

It is well known to physicians that the same

medicine will act differently in different constitutions, the very drug, that is totally inoperative in one habit, being active enough when applied to others. Much the same it seems to be with the moral part of us, the arguments, which make no impression on one class of mind, being with another abundantly efficacious. If, therefore, any of our readers should feel surprised at the Andalusian's suffering herself to be at all led away by persuasions which, to them, may have no weight, or, at all events, not weight enough to induce the abandonment of a previous determination, we can only remind them of this undeniable fact in physics; certainly with her they had their influence, and a nice ear might have detected, in the tone of her reply, that the firmness of her resolution was considerably shaken, though she was still not absolutely brought to the point of yielding.

"True," she said, in answer to the old lady's admonitions; "or at least I will so far trust your experience as to believe it true; but was ever marriage a blessing where affection was not mutual?"

“Believe me, *yes*, my dear daughter—let me cheat myself with that name, although it be only for the passing moment. When man, indeed, loves not before possession, his coldness may grow yet colder, till indifference degenerates into hatred or disgust. But it is not so with woman; her gentle nature is won by kindness and observance; with her, gratitude kindles into love, as warm, nay, warmer than the transitory passion which is lit at the eyes, and quickly blazes itself away by the very intensity of its flame.”

“Say no more,” interrupted the Andalusian; “let us drop this argument till the morning. Saints and martyrs!” this was partly muttered to herself, but, from a slight access of pettishness, in a louder key than she had intended,—“the old lady will presently persuade me that it is right and fitting I should help ring the bells for this agreeable bridal, just as a truant schoolboy is often made to carry his own rod to the place of punishment.”

“Not quite so unreasonable,” replied the matron with a good-humoured smile; “rather than give you the trouble, or that you should want such music, I would myself, ply the

bedral's office, though it might perhaps puzzle me how to set about it.—Eternal powers!—what is it I see?—Alfred, with that bloody cloth about your head!—speak to me!—Alfred! why do I see you in this horrid plight?—Alfred!”

“The Saints be merciful to us!” cried the Andalusian, upon whose firm mind visionary fears made much more impression than could be effected by realities. “To what shadow do you address yourself?—there is none in the room beside ourselves.”

“Yes — there — yonder. Do you not see him?”

She pointed with trembling hand towards the closed door, and, moving her head slowly round, seemed to follow some object in its progress towards the window. At this moment the casement rattled violently in its fastenings.

“It is only the wind,” said Maria, replying to the alarm, which, though unspoken, was sufficiently expressed in the sudden start and the fixing of the glazed eye. “For the last hour, or more, it has been getting up, and in the North, too, as you may judge from the vanes

on the opposite church-spires, and the sails going up and down the river."

"Did you see nothing?" said Lady Trevanion, dropping her hand, and breathing again more freely, like one who has just escaped from some object of terror.

"Nothing," replied Maria drily, a vague suspicion of meditated deceit flashing across her mind. But when she looked again at the noble features of the matron, and saw the agony expressed there, the doubt passed away almost as soon as formed, and left behind something like a sense of shame for ever having harboured it.

"Can fancy, indeed, play such tricks with us?" murmured Lady Trevanion, rather to herself than her companion. "Can such shadows rise, uncalled, without a cause?—impressions merely, that exist only as the eye imagines them?—Impossible!—it was his wraith, and my boy is dead."

"For Heaven's sake, Lady Trevanion!" exclaimed the Andalusian; "you terrify me beyond measure by your wild looks and wilder language."

"He is dead!" repeated the agonized mother in those thrilling tones that come from the very heart of the sufferer, and appeal no less to the hearts of others. "He is dead! the shadows of the absent cross us not without a purpose. And hark! the messenger knocks who brings the evil tidings."

This was so far true as that a, low tapping was really heard just now at the door of the dressing-room. Even the Andalusian became, to a certain extent, infected with the ideal terrors of her companion, and the summons was repeated a second, and a third time, before she could find voice enough to bid the intruder come in. It was Iñez with a letter, which having delivered to her mistress, she again withdrew.

On the first glance at the superscription, Maria recognized the hand-writing, and eagerly broke the seal, the chance of real evil restoring her at once to all that firmness which had been temporarily lost under the influence of visionary fears. As she read, however, the grave, but resolved, cast passed away from eyes and brow, her face brightening up, and

a good-humoured, but sarcastic, smile playing about her mouth. She turned to her visitor—

“Be of good cheer, Lady Trevanion; your omen has happily deceived you, if indeed it was any thing more than the mere creation of your over-excited brain. Here is that in my hand which gives the lie to your shadows, whether real or imaginary. Alfred lives—that is, if you may believe himself, and it would be a worse than Jewish stubbornness that, on such a point, would refuse him credit. You still look incredulous? why surely he must know whether he lives or not, as well, or even better than any ghost that ever walked by moonlight. Read, and be convinced.”

Lady Trevanion received the proffered paper doubtfully, like one who, from long acquaintance with sorrow, fears to give credence to the show of better things, lest it should deceive her, and add the pain of disappointment to what she has already suffered. The letter trembled in her hand, nor was it till after a brief, but sharp, struggle with her feelings that she gained sufficient self-possession to read its contents. They ran thus:—

“SEÑORA,

“Let me crave a last favour at your hands, if not for any worth of my own, yet from your own goodness, and because it is the last. I am bound upon a long journey—so long that we may not meet again for years, perhaps, never. Before setting this wide gulf between us, let me once more look upon that face so dear to me, that I may bid farewell to you and my earthly hopes together. In the confidence that this prayer will be granted, expect me beneath the window of your saloon, when the clock strikes ten.

“ALFRED TREVANION.”

“How say you, now?” cried the Andalusian, triumphantly.

“That I am truly grateful to Heaven for this short respite—it is no more. But, short as it is, it allows me time and opportunity to fall at your feet, and implore you to show compassion, if not on the unhappy son, upon the yet more unhappy mother.”

“Nay, but, Lady Trevanion, this must not be ; it ill beseems your age and quality to kneel

to my inexperience. I blush for both of us. Rise, I entreat you."

"Grief will not let me rise; it presses on me with a weight of lead, and holds me to the earth till a word from you remove it. The power of many men failed to lift the stone from the magician's cave, but a single word, the talisman of a syllable, rolled it off as lightly as it had been a feather."

"Was ever passion so mad?" said the Andalusian. "And yet it is such love as a woman might well be proud to have inspired—so perfect! so devoted!—that sees nothing on earth, scarcely in Heaven, beyond the one object of its worship."

"It is—it is all this—and more," exclaimed Lady Trevanion; "but oh! decide, before the fatal hour has struck, and pity and regret shall be unavailing. Already the evening darkens into night. Yet a few hours, a mere spa upon the dial that you will hardly note, and he, my own, my dearest one—he, who is full of life with all its hopes and fears, may be a senseless corpse; that face which now delights all eyes may be a cold disgusting mass, that

voice, so rich and musical, may be dumb even at the call of the woman he adores, or of the mother, who would gladly lay down her own life as the price of prolonging his.—Oh, Alfred! —Oh, my son ! my son !”

They who have had the good fortune to see the unrivalled Siddons in the character of Constance, when she enthrones her sorrow on the earth, and bids “kings come bow to it,” may have some idea of the picture of noble sorrow presented by Lady Trevanion ; to convey any thing more than a feeble notion of it by description would be impossible. In the paroxysm of her grief, she had sunk from her kneeling position on the floor, and there she lay, her head uplifted and supported on her left arm, while the big drops slowly coursed down a cheek as pale as marble, and well nigh as rigid. It was a sight that might well have moved a colder heart than throbbed in the bosom of the impetuous Andalusian, who was only too often led away by a momentary impulse to grant what her reason, had she given time for its voice to be heard, would full certainly have refused. Flattered—as what woman

would not have been? — by the vehemence of Alfred's affection, which brooked death, rather than live denied, and yet more subdued by the quality of his mother's grief, she yielded to their united influence, and consented to become his bride. But joy, even in strong minds, is oftentimes more difficult to be borne than sorrow, and the bosom of Lady Trevanion swelled almost to bursting in the effort to maintain some degree of firmness, and make a suitable reply to this sacrifice, as generous as it was unexpected. Fortunately, however, to prevent worse consequences, nature would assert her own rights in defiance of all attempts to controul her; the overjoyed mother involuntarily gave way to a passion of tears, which, like other storms, left, on passing away, a clearer and purer atmosphere behind.

In the calm that ensued, a sort of cabinet-council was held between the new confederates on the most prudent plan to be adopted for bringing back their wild hawk to his lure, before worse should happen from his flight. So far, indeed, as their fears or their foresight went, there was little danger to be apprehended

from waiting quietly till he came back, as he had himself proposed in his letter, to take his last farewell ; but, with such a disposition, no ordinary precaution could be deemed superfluous. They agreed, therefore, that Lady Trevanion should return home, and send out messengers to search for Alfred in every place where, from his usual habits, he was most likely to be found, each bearing a special invitation to him from the Andalusian. In case of the worst, however, she was to come back and join the ball the moment the necessary orders had been despatched, and she had found leisure to put herself into a dress proper to the occasion.

CHAPTER VIII.

Are you grown an atheist? will you turn your body,
Which is the goodly palace of the soul,
To the soul's slaughter-house? O, the cursed devil,
Which doth present us with all other sins
Thrice candied o'er; despair with gall and stibium;
Yet we carouse it off.

THE WHITE DEVIL.

LEFT once again to herself, Maria was by no means so well satisfied of the wisdom of her own conduct as she had been when under the more immediate influence of Lady Trevanion. A lassitude of spirit naturally enough followed on the previous excitement, and that weariness sobering down the fancy, while it gave a fairer play to reason, she began to doubt whether she had not thought too much of others, and too

little of herself, when she promised away her hand upon no better ground than a simple feeling of pity. But there was now no help for it; her word was past, and the only consolation left her was that there are full as many slips between judgment and the gallows as between the cup and the lip. She was not yet married, and, comforting herself with the reflection that perhaps she never might be, she called in *Iñez* again, and addressed herself to the unfinished business of the toilette.

There are few occupations so soothing, or so engrossing, to a female mind as this same adornment of the person, the toilette being to woman pretty much what the council-chamber is to the statesman, or his study to the lawyer, —the trial-ground, namely, where each prepares arms for the furtherance of his ambitious views upon his neighbours. But on the present occasion it was more than usually delightful. Taking advantage of the latitude of fashion, allowed by a masqued ball, Maria had put on the dress of an Andalusian peasant, which with its short petticoat, its closely-fitting crimson boddice, open down the breast and profusely

trimmed with gold, and a black shoe upon a fairy-like foot, presented one of the most picturesque costumes ever invented by female ingenuity.

The image, reflected in the glass, had the same effect upon her home-sick fancy that the *rans de vaches* is said to produce upon the Swiss when away from his native mountains; an inexpressible longing came upon her for the sunny fields and clear blue skies of her own Andalusia; at the moment she would have given worlds, had she possessed them, to be transported from the dull dreary atmosphere of London—dull even when it was brightest—to some Spanish valley, with a brilliant moon above, and the shadow of the cork, or chesnut, tree below, tempering to coolness the air that was hot and languid with the fragrant breath of the sleeping flowers.

“Ah!” she murmured, as, turning from the glass, she looked out upon the night, and saw the Thames rolling darkly along in the pale light of an April sky—“if our witty Gondemar thought a Spanish moon well worth an English sun, what would he say of that silver spark

yonder, which is scarcely brighter than the glow-worm?"

She had little time, however, to indulge in these reflections, had she been so inclined, for it was now close upon eight, a late hour for the commencement of any festival in those days. Perez's Chinese lanterns already twinkled like so many glow-worms, while a more efficient light was afforded by flambeaux, which, at one end of the room, burnt upon the mantel-piece in silver chandeliers, and at the other in the hands of a score of serving men, whose dress was yet more singular than their office. Their long sleeves hung down to the ground, much like those worn by mandarins, and so far were in keeping with the Chinese character of the room; they were, however, the actual fashion of the day, being worn even by coachmen, greatly to the astonishment of the curious traveller, Monconnys, who, after having visited three parts of the habitable globe, found these same hanging sleeves well worthy of a grave record.

The ball-room now began to fill rapidly, for every age must have its lion, and the Andalu-

sian, as we have already seen, was the reigning lion, or rather lioness, of the hour. In the centre of one circle might be seen Queen Catherine of Braganza herself, her fine eyes and sweet smile qualifying in some measure the defects of her bad teeth, and an olivader complexion, which in her case wanted the redeeming purity and clearness that characterized Dolores. In another group was the fierce and haughty Castlemaine, as splendid as jewels and excess of bravery could make her, for, however the Queen might have refused such society on her first introduction to England, she had come at last to yield to necessity, if indeed the general corruption of the Court had not so far tainted her native feelings as to make it a matter of indifference. Here too was the beautiful Stewart surrounded by her peculiar circle of admirers, all that the Court could supply of rich, and fair, and noble, being collected on this occasion,—the admired meteors of the day, though now their names, if they survive at all, are only to be found in the mouldy pages of the antiquarian. Of this brilliant company the greater part was masked,

and some few were dressed in character, but in most cases the mask no more concealed the wearer than the helmet hid the knight of old, who, although he might have his beaver up, yet showed his real name to the initiated by the bearings upon his shield.

It was not long before the King himself made his appearance, followed by Rochester and the Duke, and the presence of royalty with the two leading wits of the day lent a new zest to the scene. Without any such intention on his part, Charles might have been supposed as much in carnival character as any of those about him, for, although he wore no mask, he had abandoned the usual French fashion of doublet, stiff collar, bands, and cloak, for a Persian habit. This was a long cassock of black cloth, fitting close to the body, over which was worn a coat, while underneath, to borrow the quaint phraseology of the times, it was pinked with white silk. Round the waist went a girdle, held by a diamond buckle, and the legs were ruffled with black riband like the legs of a partridge, a fashion by no means becoming to the human biped, whatever it

might be to the bird. About either knee, on the outside of the hose, was a garter, fastened, like the belt, with a buckle set with brilliants, and the shoes were fastened with strings as singular in those days as any other part of the dress. Notwithstanding that the 'white pink-ing' had somewhat of a magpie appearance, Charles was not a little proud of his new costume, and, on Sedley's coming forward to pay his compliments, he triumphantly asked him, "how he liked the fashion of his garments?"

"The quaintest masking-guise in the room," replied the courtier.

"Masking-guise!" exclaimed the King — "oddsfish, man, I intend it for the general wear of court and city, if they have grace enough to follow the example of their sovereign. People don't stick to say I 'm a Frenchman in my heart, but they shan't be able to say the same of my habits."

"Twenty gold pieces to as many silver crowns," rejoined Buckingham, "your Majesty returns to cloak and doublet before the month is out."

"It 's a wager," replied the King. "And you, Rochester, are you minded to peril any loose coin upon the same venture?"

"Nay, I will let your Majesty off better cheap ; I will stake the same sum against your royal pardon for the next offence I may commit."

"A most unequal stake," said Charles ; "your faults are generally of a kind that pardon would be cheap at twice the sum. Nevertheless, I take the wager."

"Let me hold the stakes," said Stewart, joining them ; "it will be all the better for the winning party."

"Say you so, ma belle?" replied Charles, and, drawing out his purse, he was about to comply with her request, when Castlemaine, who had observed this movement of her rival, broke from the glittering crowd that had surrounded her, and hastily advanced to them. Charles coloured slightly at the approach of his formidable favourite, and seemed irresolute, but, just in time to save his credit, he caught sight of the Andalusian ; this gave him an opportunity of turning from a subject that

must have compromised him with one of the reigning sultanas, and most gladly did he seize it—

“Oddsfish!” he exclaimed; “here at last comes our fair hostess. She is somewhat late, though, in bidding us welcome to her Eastern temple.”

“It may be a part of Eastern etiquette,” said Castlemaine, spitefully, “to let such guests as your Majesty make themselves welcome.”

“Exactly so,” retorted the Andalusian, whose quick ears had caught more perhaps than was intended for them; “King Charles needs not the word of any subject to tell him he is welcome. Still, not to incur the censure of Lady Castlemaine, permit me gratefully to acknowledge your Majesty’s condescension in visiting my humble dwelling.”

Lady Castlemaine bit her lips and tossed her head disdainfully at this sarcasm, much to the amusement of the Duke, who whispered to Rochester,—“Fore George, we shall have the grand sultana flinging down her gauntlet presently.”

“And if she does, my life on it, ’tis taken

up; the Spaniard is not one who wears a pocket for affronts."

To stifle this new feud in the bud, Charles hastily presented Buckingham and Rochester to the Andalusian, saying, at the same time, "I accept your excuse, señora, as frankly as it is offered, trusting always that in return you will allow *my* excuses to pass current for these offenders."

But here again the poor King was no less unlucky than in his former efforts, for Maria had by no means forgotten, though she had reluctantly promised to forgive, their offence, and, what she felt, her eye and cheek would betray, though she contrived to put a curb on that hard-ruled member the tongue.

"Nay," continued Charles, observing these angry symptoms, "culprits though they be, they may plead your previous pardon; that is sound law at Westminster, and may well, therefore, serve our turn here in the Strand."

"True," replied the Andalusian; "but your Majesty must needs recollect that the pardon, you talk of, was conditional."

"On the honour of a king, and the word of-

an English gentleman," said Charles, with unwonted dignity. "It is not necessary you should speak out more plainly on the subject. We understand each other."

"Enough—and more than enough," answered Maria; "I could not ask of your Majesty to condescend so far."

The pardon of the culprits was thus signed and sealed with what to us may appear very little ceremony, and it may serve among other things to show the character of the times that such offenders could find a royal intercessor, and be afterwards admitted, without scruple, not only into general society, but into the house of the very female they had so deeply wronged—as if abduction, with even a worse intent behind, were no more than a venial fault to be atoned for by the same lip-repentance that would have excused a hasty word or an angry argument.

To repay this concession, or because he was, like his loving subjects, attracted by the singular fascinations of this Spanish fairy, Charles became her partner for the opening bransle, or brawl, and then, fearing the rival claims of

Castlemaine and Stewart for his hand, retreated to the basset-table, where the graver part of the company were either pillaging, or being pillaged. Yet, even this act of prudence did not save him. Castlemaine, indignant at his defection, whispered something to Rochester quite loud enough to reach the king, and call the blood up to his cheek, but which, however, he forebore to notice, experience having abundantly shown him the danger of such feuds. Satisfied that her arrow had hit the mark, she laughed aloud, and gave her hand to the satirist, whereupon the dancing re-commenced with a vigour that momentarily increased as all became more and more excited by the noise, glare, and heat, no less than by the wine that circulated freely. In the intervals of the dance, and sometimes, indeed, to its interruption, the masqueraders plied their fictitious characters, the usually licentious humour of the time losing none of its grossness by being uttered behind a mask. Jests, as little veiled as the statue of the Medicean Venus, and as coarse as the granite sphynx, passed around, not only unproved, but amidst shouts of

laughter, in which the ladies and royalty itself joined without a blush.

It was now the high flood-time of revel, so far as that name belongs to crowded rooms, where, amidst the blaze of lights, the intoxicating strains of music, the yet more maddening sounds of the dice-box, and the giddy mazes of the dance, all were pursuing the same phantom, Pleasure. In the midst of these orgies, the Andalusian, who had totally forgotten all about Lady Trevanion, was disagreeably reminded of her promise by seeing the matron stalk in, looking, if that were possible, more pale and sad than ever. She, however, maintained a sufficient controul over her feelings to give the unwelcome guest a friendly reception, and to inquire, with something like an appearance of interest, if she had seen or heard any thing of Alfred.

“Not a syllable,” was the disconsolate reply.

“No matter; we may expect him here shortly, for 'tis near upon the stroke of ten. Let us look out and see if there be any signs yet of his coming.”

She led the way to a deep bay-window, look-

ing out upon the garden, but, though the moon shone brightly, they could see no one except Perez, who watched below by her order. This was a wise precaution, had it been fairly followed up; but unluckily, from a false delicacy towards the principals in this business, she had only placed in him a partial confidence, desiring that he would bring up Alfred the moment he appeared, without, however, hinting there was any mischief to be feared or guarded against. The old man, therefore, was a most unwilling watchman, and, as he paced up and down in the cold moonlight, cast from time to time a longing glance at the servants' hall, where his liveried brethren were eating and drinking to their heart's content over a roaring wood-fire that blazed all the warmer to his fancy because he was not allowed to feel it. But neither his mistress, nor her newly-acquired friend, gave the slightest sympathy to his griefs, the one being at the moment much too pettish, while the sorrow of the other was too absorbing to bestow a thought on any thing except itself.

Nearly half an hour had thus passed, and

still she continued with her eyes intently fixed upon the circuit of the garden, when Maria, wearying of this hopeless vigil, as much as Perez himself could do, endeavoured to persuade her to join the company.

“In a few minutes,” was the reply, given almost without heeding the speaker.

But still she moved not, and the Andalusian felt her situation growing more and more irksome; it was plain enough to be seen that she had spoken truly in saying she did not love, and that her thoughts were much more with the many present than with the one absent. Just then the entrance of the Spanish Ambassador offered an opportunity of escape, which she seized as eagerly as a schoolboy might catch at the chance of evading a weary lesson.

“Lamoral!” she exclaimed,—“the Prince de Ligne!—I must needs pray you to excuse me for a short time, Lady Trevanion; my duty of hostess bids me go and welcome him, the rather as to-morrow he leaves England.”

The matron replied by a mute sign of assent, and Maria, nothing loth, tripped off on a light

foot to receive her countrymen, who were not the less welcome in her eyes that, with the true attachment of Spaniards to their own fashions, they were dressed in their native costume. With the exception of the Prince himself, all wore masks, and one, a slim young man of about four-and-twenty, seemed disposed to take a part in the frolics of the evening, for he had on the gay habits of an Andalusian tauridor.

After the usual compliments had passed between Lamoral and his hostess, and the former had passed on to where he saw the Queen, the tauridor advanced to Maria, and addressed her in a voice that she could well hear was feigned, though unable to recognize it.

"May Lope, the matador, pray the favour of your hand, my fair Andalusian, for the next dance—not the brawl, nor even the islanders' dance—country dance, I think they call it—but the fandango."

And he snapped the castanets sharply, a sound that made her ears tingle and her eyes glisten. But she repressed her feelings.

"I fear you must excuse me; such an

exhibition might little suit the taste of those around us."

"I must not hear such a scandal on the taste of my loving subjects," exclaimed Charles, who had stolen upon them unnoticed. "If we have not feet to dance the fandango, at least allow that we may have eyes to admire it. And here comes our gracious Catherine, who will tell you she is heartily tired of brawls and co-rantos, and would gladly see or hear any thing that might remind her of her own Portugal. Is it not so, ma mie?"

"Ah, si, si," replied the Queen, joining so eagerly with Charles in his request for the fandango that Maria, had she been less willing than she really was, had no excuse for farther hesitation.

"Since it is your Majesties' pleasure," she said; and turning to the tauridor with a slight courtesy, she added—"I am at your service, Señor."

It has been often said, by Scotchmen at least, that no one but a native Caledonian can do justice to a Scotch melody, and with as much, if not more, truth, we may affirm that none but

a Spaniard can dance the fandango, as it is seen even amongst the peasants of that country. With the natives of any other land, it is either too tame, or else it degenerates into grossness. With the Andalusian it is indeed all fire, but then it is the pure ethereal flame, without smoke, without any material particle, to alloy the brightness of the burning element. All the grace of Taglioni, all the voluptuousness of Fanny Elssler, could they have been combined in one person, would yet have failed to give an adequate idea of our Andalusian as she glided on fairy foot through the mazes of the dance, now languidly as if exhaling her very soul, and the next moment snapping her castanets with glowing cheeks and kindling eyes, while every motion of her limbs was music. Charles was loud in his acclamations, and for once the surrounding courtiers were sincere in echoing the King's opinions. Castlemaine tried to look shocked at a dance so immoral, but she caught a glance from the satiric eye of Rochester that for once brought the colour to her cheeks, and she was fain to toss her head and turn away. Stewart giggled more sillily than ever; and as

to the poor Queen, the tears gushed into her eyes at the recollections thus awakened of home and country.

But if the greater share of applause was given to Maria, her partner in the fandango, though manifestly her inferior both in grace and spirit, excited no little attention from another cause when the first tumult of delight was over. Curiosity was afloat to know who and what he was, and the question was buzzed about the room for several minutes to the exclusion of every other topic.

"He came with the Spanish ambassador," said one.

"It must be then the Prince's secretary," replied another; "he has just the same height and form."

"For the height I will say nothing," rejoined a third; "but the secretary is stout for his years, and this youngster is thin enough to be a willow wand."

In the meanwhile the object of these, and a hundred similar, remarks appeared to the jealous eyes of Charles to be courting his beautiful countrywoman.

"Thanks," he said to her—"many thanks for the happiest moment of my life. I have danced my last ball in—"

He hesitated—

"In England, you would say," continued Maria, astonished that any Spaniard should feel regret at quitting a land she abominated. "You return then with the Prince to-morrow?—in that I see little cause for sorrow or hesitation."

"Do I not leave you behind, Señora?"

"Oh yes," replied Maria laughingly—"and the sun too—but you will find another and a brighter one in Andalusia, or the land is much altered since I left it."

At this moment the clock struck eleven—the sound recalled her to thoughts she would willingly have forgotten, and, looking round, she saw Lady Trevanion in her old position, but with a deadly paleness on her brow, and to all appearance ready to faint. Internally wishing her troublesome guest any where else, she bowed to the tauridor, and left him again to ply her office of comforter.

"He comes not," said Lady Trevanion on

seeing Dolores at her side; "I cannot endure this suspense much longer."

"Nor will it last long," said the Andalusian; "rest assured he will soon be here now. In the meanwhile let me prevail upon you to retire to the next room, where the air is cooler, and you may be in quiet. The heat and noise of this saloon are too much for you."

"Your servant will keep watch below?" murmured Lady Trevanion in a voice almost inarticulate from exhaustion.

"Have you no fear of that; Perez does indeed get more wilful as he grows older, and such, I fear, will be found the case with most of us, but he is faithful and honest, if ever man deserved to be called so."

Confirmed by these assurances, Lady Trevanion allowed herself to be led to a small room, separated from the saloon by a narrow passage, and a short flight of steps not more than three in number, such as the builders of olden times used to delight in, for no other conceivable purpose than that of exercising the limbs and the patience of the in-dwellers. Here, resting on a sofa, and breathing a purer

atmosphere, she felt in a short time considerably relieved, though, such still was her state of exhaustion, she was not sorry when the necessity of attending to her guests compelled Maria once again to leave her.

In the short interval of the Andalusian's absence, a great change had taken place in the saloon. Francisco Corbetta had arrived, lute in hand, and at the appearance of this fashionable idol the basset-tables were deserted, the brawls and the corantos suddenly ceased, and many of those in character laid aside their masks. Rochester protested that he should no longer hold the story of Orpheus for a fable, inasmuch as the Italian had shown an equal power, the only difference being that his stocks and stones were cut into the human shape.

"That may be," said Buckingham; "but I doubt the sceptre has something to do in this matter as well as the lute. Do you see how old Rowley courts him?—By my faith, he has at last succeeded, and by that twang, twanging, it should seem the signor is about to favour us with a specimen of his skill."

"Hush!—hush!—hush!" was buzzed about

the room, as the musician preluded with a light and rapid finger, evincing a perfect mastery of his instrument. The words of the ballad we give as he sang it, and it is said that the melody, which had been lost for many years, has been lately found—the poets of Provence were *trouveurs*, or *finders*—by the genius of Le Jeune.

AGE'S ANGER AND REPENTANCE.

The Old Man leant on his oaken staff,
Where the village fathers sleep,
As slumber the blest, who have gone to rest,
And can no longer weep.
He leant on his staff, while the children's laugh
Was loud in their thoughtless glee ;
And his eye grew bright with an angry light—
“ 'Tis so they will dance o'er me.”

Then he smote the earth with his oaken staff,
And to Heaven he raised his head,
And he cursed the child who, with spirits wild,
Was trampling o'er the dead.
Yes, he cursed the boy, whose smile of joy
Was the light of his father's cot ;
But with wrath he burn'd, and his heart was turn'd,
And the good he remember'd not.

Seven days went round, and again he leant
On his staff by a new-made grave,
While the funeral bell pealed a heavy knell
For the boy who there had played.
Then his spirit was quell'd, that had so rebell'd,
And he knelt in prayer as he sighed—
“I thought not of this! 'twere better, I wis,
The old man himself had died.”

“Bravo! — beautiful! — admirable!” — was heard from all sides, amidst the clapping of hands and the waving of handkerchiefs, while the musician bowed with proud humility to his admirers, and then sank his head upon the instrument, as if deprecating any farther applause, or as being exhausted by his own enthusiasm. But his audience were too much carried away by their delight to be so easily reduced to silence, and the clamours had not yet subsided when a single voice, coming, as it seemed, from the garden, and pitched in so high a key as to be distinctly heard above all, called out—

“Maria de los Dolores!”

Of all capricious passions fear is notoriously one of the most capricious, coming and going pretty much as the wind blows, where it listeth. Still if we had not so many pregnant examples

of the best and bravest flying in troops at the mere shadow of danger, one might be puzzled to understand how the whole of a brilliant company, amidst the blaze of lights too, should be all at once panic-stricken at so simple a circumstance. Such, however, was the fact. There was a general feeling of alarm at this cry, varying only in degree with the different tempers and habits, and each by his looks seemed to ask the other—"What does this mean?"

"Maria de los Dolores!" called the same voice a second time; and the Andalusian, recovering from her first panic, started up, and was rushing towards the window when Charles caught her by the arm—

"Allow me, Señora; this may be some ruffian, who aims at your life."

"'Tis he!" cried the Andalusian; "I pray you, Sire, let me go; there is no peril to any one here."

Rushing from the King's half-relaxed grasp, she darted across the room, and, hastily flinging open the window, exclaimed—"I am here, Alfred."

She had just time to look out, and discover in the now unmasked tauridor the features of Alfred Trevanion, when a flash of light crossed her eyes, followed by a sharp, ringing report of a pistol.

“Sancta Maria!” she ejaculated. “Perez! —where are you, Perez?”

Roused by this summons, as well as by the pistol-shot, the old man hurried forth from the kitchen, whither he had betaken himself a short time before. The truth is, he was not only weary of a watch that in his judgment was perfectly useless, but he was anxious also to have his share of the good things he had for an hour past seen others enjoying, while he paraded up and down in the cold moonlight; for cold it was, intensely cold, though nearly the latter end of April. His utmost speed only brought him just in time to receive the falling body of Alfred, who had kept on his feet as long as he was able, his eyes eagerly fixed on the window above, to take their last look at her he had loved so truly and so fatally.

Long before this catastrophe, Lady Trevanion, yielding more to mental anxiety than

bodily fatigue, had dropt into a disturbed slumber, and, the room where she was being in the front of the house, the noise was barely sufficient to awaken, without alarming, her, or indeed without conveying to her mind the idea that any thing extraordinary had happened. She rose, however, somewhat refreshed by her sleep, short and broken as it had been, and returned to the saloon, which, to her great surprise, she found quite deserted, though the lights were still burning, the cards and dice lay scattered about the tables, and the irregularity of seats showed they had been lately occupied. But for this she would have imagined that she was not yet awake, and that all she saw was merely the shadowing of a dream, in which, as is often the case, the dreamer was sensible of her own condition, though unable to shake it off. She looked about her in wonder, which gradually heightened into a feeling of total abandonment, that could scarcely have been deeper had she been suddenly transported to one of the wildest moors of Northumberland. The ball-room, so suddenly, and to her so strangely, deserted, seemed a lighted sepul-

chre—the illuminated hall of death. The very clock on the mantel-piece, which, like the low, small voice of conscience, had been unheard in the season of gaiety, now spoke out with painful distinctness to the ear, and made loneliness yet more lonely, just as the cry of the bittern adds to the dreary sense of solitude that hangs about his native swamps. She was not, however left long in doubt as to the cause of this desertion.

In this, as in many old-fashioned buildings, there was no way to the bed-chambers but through some other room, the best being with singularly good taste most frequently appropriated to that purpose. Here it was the saloon that, in addition to its higher offices, did duty as a passage, and hence it happened that Alfred was now brought, mortally wounded, under the eyes of his mother, and without any previous notice. Charles, who was among the first to re-enter the ball-rooms, would fain out of compassion have kept her back, but with a face that many would have thought dreadful, from its marble calmness, she said, “It avails not, Sire ; my mind tells me what has happened as truly as if mine eyes had witnessed it.”

"I am innocent of this!" exclaimed Maria in the tones of agony. "Oh, say not his blood is upon my head!"

The unfortunate mother made no reply, but knelt down by the side of the dying man, and from the motion of her lips seemed occupied in prayer. Even Charles, who, thoughtless and selfish as he was, could yet feel when brought into actual contact with suffering—which for his own ease he took care should be as seldom as possible—was touched at this scene of misery. He doffed his Persian cap, and, taking example from him, every plumed and jewelled hat in the room was instantly removed by the wearer from his head, though in many cases perhaps with even less sensibility than belonged to the king himself.

"Allow me to probe your wound with my finger," said a young surgeon, who chanced to be present; "I will give you no pain, sir."

"The leach may say what he will," whispered Sedley to Rochester; "I hold hard and fast by the omens we saw in the fields the other day. You may as easily chain the wind, or forge fetters for the lightning, as keep that

man's spirit much longer in the prison-house of the flesh."

"Now a plague upon your unsavoury comparisons," rejoined Rochester in the same key; "you are ever thinking of bolts and shackles. Had you said, it was as easy to shape a doublet for the moon, it had been a tailor-like and handsome simile; and depend upon it there is some sort of cousinship between the tailors and the Muses—nine of each, you know."

"Hush, gentlemen," said the Andalusian, who had imperfectly caught their whispers; "if you regard not the sorrows of a mother, at least respect the presence of your King."

In the meanwhile the surgeon had finished the examination of the wound. He shook his head——

"The case is hopeless."

"His will be done!" ejaculated the unhappy mother, who had hitherto kept her eyes fixed intently upon the surgeon, as if to read his sentence in his face before the lips should utter it—"His will be done!—If it be the end of hope, it is also the end of suffering."

"Do not the bells ring?" said the dying

man—"I have a strange noise in my head—the bell for the parting soul, was it not?—Why do you not answer me?—Maria!—let me once again hear the sound of your dear voice."

"'Tis only the clock that strikes," replied the Andalusian, thinking it easier to deceive, than convince, his imagination.

"And that dark shadow, that comes betwixt us—is that too deception?—Drive it away!—drive it away!"

"My son! my son!" sobbed Lady Trevanion.

"Will no one drive away that shadow?" screamed Alfred—"Mother!—Maria!—see; it grows darker—deeper—and now it fills the whole room with darkness."

The boldest, and the most callous,—in this case perhaps nearly synonymous terms,—shuddered at the tones of his voice, and a deep silence prevailed, interrupted only by the plash—plash—plash—of blood, as it oozed through his clothes, and fell in large drops upon the floor. But even now nature made a desperate rally; with a sudden bound he stood bolt upright, exclaiming "The lamps burn bright again!—

your hand, Maria, for the dance. Quick! quick!—this is my last ball—my last ball!”

The words had scarcely escaped his lips, when he reeled, and fell with his face to the floor. They turned him gently round—he was a dead man!

CHAPTER IX.

I have been provost-marshal twenty years,
And have trussed up a thousand of these rascals,
But so near Paris yet I never met with
One of that brotherhood.

LITTLE FRENCH LAWYER.

GLADLY, after the events recorded in our last chapter, would Maria have left England and returned to Spain, but, notwithstanding the interference of Charles, the law had then, as now, its glorious delays, and she found it prudent to remain 'till the settlement of her suit. To escape, however, from the painful recollections inseparable in her mind from London, she retired to Brading, in the Isle of Wight, with the determination of abiding there

'till her presence should again be required in the capital.

The first week passed off agreeably enough, and she even found a satisfaction in the absence of that turmoil which had once so much delighted her. Nay in the second seven days the green leaves of the forest had their charms for her, and she still looked out on the rolling water with a sense of pleasure. But a mind like hers, habituated to the bustle and gaieties of the world, was in reality little adapted to enjoy solitude for long together, though that solitude had lain in the gardens of Eden. Day by day her weariness of a country-life increased, and by the end of the month it had got to such a pitch that the sudden and unexpected appearance even of Cherry-Nob was welcomed by her with a feeling of pleasure.

We should wrong that illustrious character were we to suppose he had been allured to the island by any such ideal fancies as admiration of its scenery; like our modern utilitarians, he had an absolute scorn of every thing that could not be turned to account in some way or other, and, to do him justice, had as

little imagination as a thrifty citizen would have wished for in his younger son. On the present occasion, according to his own story—and for once it might be presumed he spoke no more than truth—his purse was at a low ebb, and he had come to solicit anew the bounty of the Andalusian. Notwithstanding the impudence of this demand, it found a favourable reception in the mood she then was; his necessities, real or pretended, were relieved by an ample donative, and, having succeeded thus far, it was no very difficult matter for one of his assurance to establish himself as a daily visitor. It is true, he was admitted only in the capacity of a humble dependent, but, this being the usual footing on which he was tolerated in any decent society, it gave not the least offence to his self-conceit. So far from it, he lied with the same ease and volubility as if he had been at a tavern, retailed to her all the tittle-tattle of the island, supplying from his own inexhaustible store what was wanting, and, in short, played his part so well that Maria not only learnt to bear his visits with equanimity, but to expect them with pleasure,

as some relief to the tediousness of absolute solitude. By degrees he got a step farther. He had an intimate knowledge, however acquired, of every nook and corner of the island, and was at last permitted to trot about after her in the character of cicerone, and in a great measure to direct her rambles.

He had long been earnest with her to visit Freshwater Cave, one of the objects of curiosity to all visitors, but this project had been constantly frustrated by the weather or some other trifling accident, for it was only a few days in every month that it could be entered. This period had now come round again; the neap-tide had drawn off the waters, which at other times filled the cavern, rendering it inaccessible except by boat, while a fine autumnal evening gave additional force to the persuasions of Cherry-Nob, who had embellished the cave in his own fashion till it might have vied with the Devil's Peak in Derbyshire. Yielding at length to his importunity, and the rather as, for the three or four days previous, a constant fall of rain had kept her unwillingly within doors, she gave orders for two Jersey

poneys to be saddled and bridled, sure-footed animals, that in their size and habits bore a strong resemblance to their brethren of the Shetland isles. In less than half an hour these hardy little creatures brought them safely to the desired spot, having even in that short space of time made a tolerable circuit across hills and ravines, and over ground that had never shown the least vestige of a road. Here, having first delivered their poneys to the care of a shepherd's lad, who tended his flock upon the downs, they made for a practicable part of the cliff, and descended, though not without difficulty, to the shingly beach below.

The sea had retired to low-water mark, and indeed was upon the turn, so that the sand and shingle having had full time to get dry, their walk had no other unpleasantness than what arose from the roughness of the way. Even at that period,—and subsequent years have considerably increased the size of the cavern by the decaying of its walls under the action of the tide or the influence of springs within the earth—even at that time the rays of the setting sun could scarcely penetrate its

remoter depths. This gloom, however, seemed to be its greatest recommendation, and the Andalusian, as she gazed upon the blackening walls around her, could not forbear asking him in an ironical tone,—“Is this the wonderful cave you made such boast of?—Sancta Maria! it is not a little indebted to you for its embellishments.”

“What! you think I have used the traveller’s privilege?” said the unblushing Cherry-Nob—“lied a little or so?”

“No indeed, Captain,” retorted Maria; “I accuse you of no such petty doings—you have lied, not a little, but a great deal.”

“Strange! very strange!” replied he of the sorrel head. “You really see nothing to admire in this cavern?”

“Nothing, except yourself, Captain, and you in your own way are assuredly much to be admired.”

“A good bourd—very good i’ faith—exceeding good. But the hole is a pretty sort of a hole notwithstanding.”

“We ’ll not dispute the matter just at present, for yonder comes a party of your

sight-loving countrymen. Let us leave the place to them ; I have no fancy for their company."

Thus saying, Maria began picking her way amongst the little salt-water pools left by the tide, as it ebbed, in the floor of the cavern, and over rocks that were slippery from the slime of the sea-weeds. Before, however, she had got many yards, the new-comers, who stood upon no such nicety, but splashed on through pond and puddle, in the spirit of frolic as it seemed, were close upon her. Though somewhat startled at the rudeness of their approach, she moved aside to be out of the way of the salt showers thus dashed into her face, when her foot slipped, and she stumbled towards the foremost of them, who, shouting "A prize ! a prize !" flung his cloak over her head, and pinioned her arms in his so as to prevent all resistance. The others attacked Cherry-Nob with much seeming fury, and speedily put to flight that magnanimous hero, the odds being so decidedly against him.

"If your object be plunder," exclaimed Maria, gaining a moment's breath, "take

whatever gold I have about me, but spare this useless violence. I give it freely."

"Plunder first, and pleasure afterwards," replied the ruffian with a brutal laugh; "so come along with us, mistress, and come quietly, or it may be worse for you."

He was proceeding to drag her away, having again got the cloak over her mouth so as to stifle her cries, when a ball whizzed close above their heads, and a man, in the habit of a cavalier, started sword in hand from one of the deepest recesses of the cavern. The assailants, who turned out, as the old saw has it—'of the Braxley breed, better to hang than to feed,'—fled most cur-like after exchanging a few passes only with their single opponent; and, luckily for them he had received a wound, which though slight, yet, being in the fleshy part of the thigh, was enough to render him incapable of all pursuit. He leant upon his sword, with his back against the wall for support, deeply regretting his inability to follow the ruffians and inflict upon them the chastisement they had so richly merited.

"Think not of them," replied Maria hastily,

“but of your own wounds, which seem to call for immediate help. Are you able to walk with the assistance of my arm? or could you better endure the motion of a horse? If so, I have a couple of poneys without in the care of a shepherd-lad, and we shall soon be at Brading. At any rate I fear to leave you here alone, while I go for aid, lest they should return with others of the gang.”

It was odd enough that Maria never once thought of despatching the shepherd's lad for help, or was there some lurking motive behind that she would not willingly have confessed even to herself? Be this as it may, the cavalier, who could manage to ride, though he could not walk, accepted the proffered horse, and was about to return to his inn at Newport, for it appeared he was only a visitor, come, like many others, to see and admire the picturesque scenery of the Island. But against this plan Maria strongly protested, urging upon him, with so much warmth of kindness, the advantage he would have in going to her house, instead of depending upon the care of the venal attendants at an inn, that he at length con-

sented. His only stipulation was that the friend, who came with him, and chanced to be a surgeon, should be sent for in preference to a stranger.

Time in general creeps slowly enough by the side of a sick couch, seeming on such occasions to have borrowed the crutches and weary limbs of the unlucky patient. But in this case he showed none of his usual tardiness; on the contrary, the hours flew by the wounded man and his kind nurse as if they had been plumed with wings, and when, after little more than a fortnight, Captain Mervyn—for so the stranger called himself—was again sufficiently convalescent to talk of leaving his hospitable asylum, it appeared to both like the lapse of a few days only. Though seldom suffering her free-will to be checked or curbed by the considerations that governed more prudent, or more timid, spirits, still the impropriety of pressing him to stay any longer in her solitude was much too glaring to be overlooked. She raised therefore no more, nor stronger, objections to his departure than mere ceremony required, but, having made this sacrifice to prudence,

she was the less inclined to refuse the permission he requested to visit her so long as he should remain upon the Island.

From all this it was plain to see that the Andalusian had at last become subject to the influence of the little deity whom she had hitherto derided. But in yielding to this new feeling, she gave, as in every thing else, ample evidence of a mood that had ripened beneath a Southern sun, easily kindled, and, when kindled, impetuous beyond any power of control.

She was, in fact, all soul, or, perhaps we might more truly say, all passion, loving or hating with a vehemence, a perfect singleness of heart that, to the native of a colder climate, must have seemed either sinful or akin to madness. Almost from the first hour of their meeting she had felt towards her defender as she had never before felt towards any man, and certainly there was much in him to justify this wild and sudden attachment. He possessed, to a rare degree, that fascination of voice and manner, which alone, without any other striking qualities, either of mind or body, is often sufficient to win the heart of woman. But, in

his case, nature had not done her work by halves ; when she gave to his tongue the most abundant powers of persuasion, she had been equally lavish in those external gifts which a consummate judge of human life has pronounced to be the best possible letter of recommendation. He was a model of manly beauty. Eyes of the deepest hazel ; a firm, well-shaped mouth bespeaking resolution ; coal-black hair, that hung in ringlets about an oval, but strongly-marked, face ; a full, lofty brow, on which sat command ; and a form of admirable proportion, not much above the middle height, seemed to combine in him, as far as such opposites could exist together, the qualities of a Hercules and an Antinous. In fact, he was one of those rare appearances which occur from time to time in the world, as if to confirm the supremacy of nature, by showing that the noblest and fairest works of the sculptor, the painter, and the poet, may yet be exceeded by her realities.

The Andalusian, as the general admiration of her sufficiently testified, was, in these respects, at least his equal, unless, perhaps, that the small-

ness of her figure might, by some, have been considered an objection. But Mervyn thought not so. In his eyes she was all perfect; and not a single day did he let pass without paying her his accustomed visit, his stay becoming each time longer and longer, and his delight in her society more confirmed and palpable. Indeed, so little pains did he take to disguise his feelings that they had not escaped Maria's notice, the only drawback on her pleasure being that, with such manifest tokens of a true and ardent passion, he should have so long forborne to offer his hand in marriage. Did this proceed from a doubting of her, or of himself? did he doubt her worth, her temper, or her fortune, or was it that he feared rejection, and hesitated in that fear? Nor was this all that puzzled her in Mervyn; it often seemed to her as if his voice and face, more particularly the former, were not now heard and seen for the first time, yet by no effort of recollection could she call to mind having met with him before. Still so strong was this feeling that she would frequently start at the sound of his voice, and ask herself—"Am I not re-acting some by-gone

scene of my life?—or do we, perchance, anticipate, in dreams, the very events we are hereafter to behold realized?”—Others, however, and under circumstances less likely to delude the fancy, have had the same impressions, a dim, misty recollection coming over them as if the present were only a repetition of the past.

In this way nearly two months had elapsed, when fortune seemed well-disposed to interfere, and bring that to a conclusion which, without some such help, was likely to be deferred to a very remote period. They had been taking one of their usual rambles across the downs, and at last made their way to the undercliff, when Maria, with whom this was a favourite spot, proposed their resting awhile to watch the progress of a royal frigate, which was then beating up for Spithead. The huge masses of rock that encumbered the ground having fallen from the heights above, supplied a choice of rough, but not inconvenient, seats, from which, though excluded from the rest of the Island by the chain of hills behind them, they had got a complete view of the Solent and the coast opposite.

It was one of those changeful Autumnal evenings when clouds and sunshine alternate, without, however, a drop of rain falling, and such during their previous walk had been the mood of Mervyn, in utter contradiction to his general habits. At one moment, forgetting the curb he was wont to put upon himself, his language had all the ardour that the most enamoured maiden could desire—so much so, indeed, that it seemed he was about to avow his passion; but, even then, with the words trembling on his lips, he would break off, and relapse into a moody silence. With all her natural acuteness, sharpened as it naturally was to the uttermost, Maria was at a loss to understand him. More than once she fancied that his looks betrayed compassion, or remorse—but compassion for whom?—remorse for what?

The same fitful mood was on him now. He sate silent and abstracted, scarcely answering her questions, or else answering them in such sort as proved his thoughts were given to far different matters. Maria looked at him in surprise; never before had she seen him in this

way; and her wonder was not a little heightened, when he suddenly, and as it seemed involuntarily, exclaimed—

“It must be done, however.”

“What must be done?” asked Maria sharply. “You are strangely tempered this evening, Captain Mervyn. For the last quarter of an hour you have left me to amuse myself by counting the waves, or the pebbles, or by any other equally pleasing recreation, and, now you do speak, it is more like one in a dream than a waking man. What is it that must be done?”

“I have, then, been talking to myself,” said Mervyn. “It is an old trick of mine, for the which I most truly ask your forgiveness. Yet, surely, I have said nothing that could — that is nothing that could offend you.”

“Much — very much” — answered Maria, affecting a solemn air.

“’S death! you don’t mean to say—”

Again he hesitated.

“What don’t I mean to say, Captain Mervyn? Pray let me hear my no-meaning.”

The brow of Mervyn grew dark as midnight, and he compressed his lips till the blood spurted

from them. Maria, who hardly knew how to interpret these extraordinary symptoms, went on in a tone between jest and earnest—

“Nay, if you put on such looks as those, I shall begin to think you have some grave sin upon your conscience.”

“I know not if it be a sin,” replied Mervyn, passing at once with wonderful rapidity into his usual tone and manner. “But be you my father confessor, and judge for me whether it be a sin or no.”

“And if I should undertake the office, do you promise to abide by the penance I may think proper to impose?”

“Most willingly, so it include not banishment from your presence.”

“How! conditioning beforehand with your father-confessor?—that’s much as if a school-boy should stipulate with his master for the lesser number of stripes in the event of his deserving the rod. But I will be merciful, only make a true confession.”

“Say, my fault were love—I name not the lady’s name — what, then, would be my penance?”

"Oh, matrimony, of course," replied Maria, laughing; "so the penance and the cure would go hand in hand. But you must make a clean breast of it ere I grant you absolution. Who is the happy dame?"

"Happy!" repeated Mervyn, half aloud—"are you so sure of that?"

"Really, Captain Mervyn," exclaimed Maria, pettishly, "this is too bad. You are again talking to yourself, and in such sort it almost makes me wish myself at home again."

"I attend you, Señora," said Mervyn, starting up from the rock on which he sate.

"This is the most extraordinary fashion of love-making," thought Maria to herself. But before she could utter the retort that was bursting from her lips, Mervyn had apparently recovered from his waking dream. He took her gently by the hand, his large intelligent eyes brightening with passion, and said in the softest tones of a voice that never failed to carry with it conviction—

"Your pardon, dearest lady; when away from you, I feel a bitter regret—remorse I may call it—as if in the neglect of a sacred duty.

But when I am again at your side, when I press your hand as I do now, and the light of your eye is upon me—Oh, then those darker thoughts fly off, as shadows disperse before the sun-beams. In such a moment I forget all—all except yourself.”

There was much in these few words that, to a suspicious mind, might have caused misgivings, but, if love be doubtful, he is also credulous, and Maria laughingly replied—

“Bravissimo! gallant captain. And yet, do you know, that pretty speech of yours sounds oddly to my ears under such cloudy skies as hang over your blessed island. Ah, you should talk thus to me in the beautiful land I love so well, and I might, then, believe you.”

“Believe him not,” cried a shrill voice, and at the same moment a female figure suddenly started from behind a near clump of bushes, where, herself unseen, she must have probably overheard their whole conversation. From her tattered red cloak it might be inferred that she belonged to the honourable fraternity of beggars, but the hood was so closely drawn about her face as in a great measure to conceal her features.

"Hold, lady!" cried this un-fee'd prophetess, striking the ground with her long hazel staff; "you stand on the brink of an abyss, even while you fancy that you tread the surest. Many a weary mile have I tramped, many a day's heat and rain have I endured, to bid you beware of this man. And now I say to you, once and again, avoid him as you would shun the dog's tooth or the horse's hoof. The smoke gives us warning of a fire; the clouds bid us prepare for a tempest; but human malice has no prognostics; the nearer it is, the fairer it shows."

Mervyn had been too much surprised, and, it almost seemed, confounded, to interrupt this tirade, but, the moment her voice ceased to ring in his ears, he found his tongue again.

"Woman!" he exclaimed, "are you mad? or have you a mind for the stocks and the beadle's whip, that you speak of me in this sort, and to my face?"

"Give every one his due, and the stocks and the lash would be your own portion," replied the beggar defyingly. "But it was not to you I spoke. Lady, once more I warn you, trust

him not. There is less peril in yonder waters, when the wind blows highest, than in his smooth tongue and fair speeches."

"What do you know of Captain Mervyn?" asked the Andalusian, in great surprise, and not altogether without a feeling of suspicion that there might be some truth in the woman's words, for as strangely as they sounded.

"Only this," replied the singular monitor—"he is a villain!"

The charge was uttered with an emphasis that made Mervyn start, as if he had heard the hissing of the rattle-snake. His hand instinctively flew to his sword-hilt, an action that, so far from intimidating the beggar, only served to provoke her scorn, and give increased bitterness to her railings.

"Aye, do; draw your sword upon a woman!—brave Captain—noble Captain!—though even *that* were less shame than the villany you purpose against her who stands at your side with no better breast-plate than her innocence, a weak defence—Heaven help us!—against the craft of man."

"Forgive me, Señora; but I can not choose

but marvel that you should give ear, even for a moment, to the idle ravings of this maniac," said Mervyn indignantly.

"Woe unto them that call evil, good,—and good, evil," replied the beggar. "Mad, am I? and what were you, I pray, when you plotted with other villains of less account than yourself to make the show of an attack upon that lady in the cavern, that you might gain admission into her house by your false rescue? The wound in your thigh was neither broad nor deep, I trow, or you had chosen your surgeon from another college. James Wyld, your valet, never passed through the Barber's Hall, I reckon, but then you held his tongue in your purse-strings when another might have blabbed."

"This does not look like madness," said the Andalusian, fixing a keen glance upon Mervyn.

"Do you deny her tale?"

"Let him if he dares," cried the beggar. "Let him deny my words, and damn himself more certainly, if that can be, than he is damned already. Beard of Aaron! the Christian hell had need be a wide one."

"I should know that voice," said Maria, struck no less by the phrase than the tone. "Off with your hood, woman; there must be no masking of face or feature, if you would have me give you credit."

The seeming beggar threw aside her hood.

"Rachael!" exclaimed the Andalusian.

"Even so, Señora; I owed you a good turn for the day when you saved me from the sons of Belial, and I have truly paid my debt. The Jewess stands acquitted to the Christian."

During this brief dialogue between Rachael and the Andalusian, Mervyn had found time to recollect himself, surprised and confounded as he had been by the first shock of a charge to which his own conscience, in part at least, bore a truthful testimony. Dropping on his knee to Maria, he said, "This woman has so far spoken truth, that the affair in the cavern was a premeditated scheme to gain admission for me into your house, and—forgive the word—if possible, into your heart also. Beyond this my offence does not go, and for this I can only plead the violence of a passion which I dared not avouch till now that her meddling malice

has left me no alternative. Yet I thank her. She has been to me what the surgeon is to the sick man, when his keen knife opens the imposthume, and lets out the poison which had otherwise destroyed him. Yes, Maria, I love you—dearly, honourably—and should deem it the brightest hour of life, could I prevail upon you to accept the hand and heart of a soldier, who besides these has little else to offer.”

“Rise, sir,” replied the Andalusian, while the tear glistened in her eye; “I will give you an answer presently.”—And turning to the Jewess, she said, “Rachael, I know not whether you meant me well or ill in this discovery—that I bind upon your own conscience. But here is gold, and may it prosper with you or otherwise according to your intent. Leave us.”

“I take your gold,” said the Jewess, “as the lawyer refuses not his fee, though the client may not choose to walk by his counsel. It leaves me, however, still in your debt for that matter on the banks of the Thames the other day, and the Jewess will not forget the obligation.”

With this she departed, and the Andalusian,

having watched her receding steps till she was fairly out of hearing, turned again to Mervyn.

“Captain Mervyn,” she began; “you have heard what this woman said, who has just left us. In prudence it may be I should hesitate after such a tale, but I will rather follow the impulse of my own frank nature, and on your head be the shame if you deceive me—me, a young defenceless woman, a stranger in the land, without friend to advise, or kinsman to avenge her if she be wronged. I will own, why should I not?—that I am willing to make you master of my hand and fortune—on one condition, though; and now I call upon you to say how far you can fulfil it. As you had a mother, whose honour you revere,—as you had a father, whose memory you would not stain by any vileness of your own,—as you fear a Hell, and hope for Heaven—by one, and all of these, I charge you tell me, is this offer made without guile? does it cover no evil purpose?—in one word, do you really and truly love me?”

During this passionate address, delivered with all the fire of her southern temperament,

Mervyn had been agitated by some strange emotions, that to a more suspicious mind might well have given rise to doubts. The colour left his lips, and he knit his brows till every latent furrow started out at once, and the veins in his forehead swelled almost to bursting. Still his reply was uttered in 'the decisive tone that should only belong to truth.

"I call Heaven to witness," he said, "that my heart is truly yours,—and never more truly than in the present hour !"

"And mine is yours," murmured the Andalusian, sinking in the ecstasy of joy upon his bosom.

CHAPTER X.

This looks not like a nuptial.

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING.

It was agreed that the nuptial ceremony should not take place till their return to London, when it was to be celebrated at Richmond, which even in those days was as much admired for the beauty of its site as it is now, though in size and the general character of the houses it was little other than a village. This place had been chosen in deference to the wishes of Mervyn. Here, for many successive generations, his ancestors had been born, while in the church belonging to it they had been uniformly christened, married, and buried, like racers

returning to the same goal whence they started; here too, having gone through the first of these ceremonies, he was extremely desirous of being married; and here, although with much less anxiety for the approach of the time, he devoutly hoped one day to sleep in his final resting-place. To this arrangement, Maria, who as a good Catholic cared not for one Protestant church more than another, made no objection; all that she stipulated for was that the wedding should be strictly private, and that the ceremony should be gone through a second time at her own house by a Catholic priest.

Mervyn was anxious, as might have been expected, to abridge the time of their stay in the Island, and, had it depended upon himself, would have immediately started for the metropolis; but whether the lady feared lest the value of the prize might be diminished by too easy winning, or whether she really entertained some natural female fears at so material a change in her condition, or from whatever cause it might be, she put off the journey from day to day, till it was now close upon

Christmas. Perhaps she would have still gone on hesitating and protracting, but tales affecting her reputation began to be afloat, at first in whispers only like guilty things afraid of light, but in a short time the voice of calumny became bolder, and these whispers rose to exclamations against her as the supposed mistress of Captain Mervyn, coupled with such remarks as vulgar malice seldom fails to bestow on the victim of its pursuit. As, however, none can slander a clear conscience to itself, for a time Maria bore these attacks, if not with indifference, at least with a fair show of it, though she could not help wondering how, or with whom such cruel and groundless aspersions had originated. Had she been aware that Rochester was in the Island, and had been for some time at no great distance from Brading, she might have ceased to marvel on the subject, or have exchanged this wonder for the greater surprise of seeing Mervyn in constant and friendly intercourse with one who was pleased without any cause to constitute himself her bitterest enemy.

“All sorts to our wishes,” said that amiable

personage one day to Mervyn. "There's not a soul in the Island but is ready to swear that some one—he can't exactly say who, but some one—has actually seen you and Dolores with your heads upon the same pillow. Oh, that Cherry-Nob is a jewel of a rogue; a lie costs him so little!—but then to be sure the necessaries of life should be cheap."

"I wonder," replied Mervyn, "you should trust that fellow; by your own acknowledgement he shifts his part as often and as easily as a player, and is about as much in earnest. It was but the other day you told me how he stole behind your back and had well nigh beaten out your brains in rescue of this very woman."

"Aye, marry did he, and would do the same again, if she could make it his interest to turn traitor and betray us. But she can't. I've learnt that of the rascal, lately, which brings his neck within the compass of a hempen-collar, and 'fore George, if he blabs a single syllable, or flinches in the least when I bid him stand fast, he swings for it as sure as Monday follows Sunday."

"By Heavens, Rochester, you make me blush for my own villany, when I hear you talk so freely of that which should be done, if it were possible, without the help of words to tell it."

"What a shame-faced ass you must be then; and yet I should have thought that three years at Court and twice as many in camp might have helped you to a gentlemanly assurance, even if they failed to bronze your face against blushing."

"Be silent, Rochester, unless you would have me drop this design now and for ever. If I look only half as black as my thoughts, the devil himself is not blacker."

"Bless your sweet face, you look as white as any snow-drop; your villany, since you will call it so, shows as pale and qualmish as though it had got a fit of the mother."

"And you seem to me to have the saucer eyes, the fiery breath, and the horned front of Lucifer."

"Horns, say you? consider my dear fellow that I am a married man, and don't talk of such cuckoldly emblems in my presence. Never mention a rope in the house of a thief, or hint

of wall-flowers to one who has been in Newgate. But, in sober sadness now—can't you see, without the help of spectacles, that in no other way would our revenge be more than half perfect? Besides, the capricious mood is on the gipsy, and you shall as easily move Mort Stone as persuade her to quit the Island. Here she is, and here she will stick, like a limpit to his rock, in spite of all your wooings and cooings, your sighings and lyings, unless you can make the place too hot to hold her. Speak I not sooth, most virtuous Julian?"

"It may be that you do," replied Mervyn; "but there are some people, with whom falsehood is so familiar that no one believes their truth even when they do chance to utter it."

"I'll owe you for that gird, man of wisdom. In the meanwhile, 'I macte virtute, puer,' as the old Roman said to a dashing young spark like myself, whom he caught going to a—ahem! I'll not shock your chaste ears by naming what you may well guess without my help. By the bye though, that same Cato must have been a bit of a Puritan to have had such convenient ideas of morality."

"Tie up your tongue, you feather-pated coxcomb, for yonder, if I mistake not, is the Jewess on the watch again."

"'Tis her red cardinal, sure enough," said Rochester. "Damn the hag of Endor! I'll have her sewed up in a hog's skin, and beaten to a mummy, if she attempts to put her spoon into my dish. Holloa, you there!—Jewess—thief—pandar—poisoner—thou compound of more abominations than are to be found in a beastly black pudding—wilt answer to none of thy names?"

"She has skulked away," replied Mervyn; "and I too must be gone. It is near upon the time I should be with Maria, and her proud spirit ill brooks the shadow of neglect."

"May the Devil, from whom she had her pride, grant a plentiful increase to it. But for that one unwashed part in the heel of Achilles, our shafts would fly in vain against her."

"Rochester," said Mervyn, turning to depart; "I have cause—good cause for what I have done, or may yet do, in this matter; but you—by Heavens! had I no other, or better, ground than you have for thus pur-

suing her, I would rather join hands with the most loathsome and infectious leper than walk another instant in the path that we are treading."

"Tut, man, there's scripture warrant for the deceit. Did not Jacob put on the garments of his brother, Esau, that he might pass for the elder-born?"

"He did so," replied Mervyn, sternly; "but it was to gain a father's blessing. What you seek is best known to yourself, and the fiend, who is your counsellor."

"Gone you are," cried Rochester as his companion strode off—"God send you good shipping to Wapping."

But Mervyn either heard him not, or else held the taunt unworthy of his notice. The satirist, however, could not help continuing, in the same vein, though he had no longer the benefit of an auditor,

"Was there ever such a dish of skim-milk?—such a yea-forsooth, Puritan in the cloak and doublet of a merry cavalier?—No cause, does he say? why the jest of the thing is alone sufficient cause with any one who does not

belong to the fraternity of asses. But if that's not enough, haven't I a most patriotic purpose in this same plot? haven't I sworn to tame the gipsy's pride and bring her to be as arrant a Pegs' Ramsay as Nell Gwynne herself, or any other blowsabel of Court or City? And I'll do it too, or my name's not Rochester. Saint George and the Dragon! does she think to pass the Court, duty-free, when every other woman pays toll as surely as a merchantman discharges the Sound-dues before entering the Baltic?—But how if Julian's heart should fail him?—confound the fellow! he lives in as perpetual fear of the thing he calls conscience as Pisander did of seeing his own ghost.”

While Rochester thus soliloquized on the scruples of his friend, the latter was on his way to Brading, his whole mind at variance with itself and tormented with feelings and objects that were absolutely irreconcilable. On seeing Maria, he found that Rochester had told him no more than truth when he boasted of having thoroughly undermined her fair name with the people of the island. So widely had the poison spread that the pastor of Brading,

a weak, but well-intentioned man, had even conceived it a part of his Christian duty to warn the helpless foreigner, as he imagined her to be, of these evil reports, that were buzzing about as numerous as the butterflies in a hot summer, and many of them as dark-coloured as the wings of the death-head moth. Of course he got but small thanks for his trouble, though the goodness of his purpose seemed to merit forbearance, if not gratitude. The Andalusian, fiery as she was, had scarcely patience to hear him to an end, and, when Mervyn came, he found her boiling with rage, and fully determined to meet her slanderers with defiance. So far from allowing them to move her an hour before the appointed time, she vowed she would protract her abode there 'till Spring—'till Summer—nay, 'till Winter came round again; and for a week, or more, she kept faithful to her resolution. By that time she began to discover, as many have done before her, that however cheap Philosophy might hold such calumnies, they were like a swarm of mosquitoes, whom it was equally difficult to crush or to bear the sting of, their very buzzing being

sufficient to banish all hopes of quiet, in spite of their utter insignificance. Yielding, therefore, although with a very bad grace, she at length prepared to quit the island, attended only by her own domestics, Mervyn having set off the day before by the way of Portsmouth. This difference of time and route was a submission to public opinion, suggested by the prudence of Perez, but it went sorely against the grain with his high-spirited mistress, who, on mounting her horse to ride to Cowes, where she was to embark for Southampton, did not fail to bestow her valedictions upon the island in terms that would have scandalized the natives not a little, could they have understood them. Luckily, they were uttered in Spanish, which probably saved her from being hooted and stoned out of this Hampshire Eden by the curious crowd of all ages and condition, that had assembled to witness the departure of the outlandish Madam—"she who war kept by Captain Mervyn — more shame for him, to hand-fast with a Papisher, when there war so many honest Protestant blowsabells to be had for the asking."

It was the second week in January when the Andalusian again set foot in London, and found it so changed in its appearance by the extreme rigour of the season that it might well have passed for some Russian city. The houses, covered with snow, were as little like what they had been as the Northern fox, when he has put on his white wintry fur, resembles the same animal in the livery of summer ; and the Thames, which she had left a sparkling river, carrying on its broad bosom more craft of every kind than floated in all the other harbours of Europe put together, had become for many miles one solid sheet of ice. Higher up, by the village of Chelsea, the effect of the frost was not a little singular. All along the shore, the frozen plain was covered with innumerable ice-blocks, of every possible form and size, that had been arrested in their downward course by the sudden gripe of Winter, and now built up a fantastic resemblance to the fallen pillars and capitals of some ruined city. It was in fact an icy Palmyra,—a Tadmor in the midst of a waste of snows, instead of a sandy desert, while the desolation was made

yet more desolate by the appearance of the skies and trees that alike stooped under the burthen of the weather. The sun, tinged by the hazy atmosphere into a deep, dull crimson, spread to double its wonted size, and hung like some direful portent above the city. In the air a strange stillness prevailed ; not a bird was on the wing ; but from time to time this oppressive silence was broken for the moment by the splitting of some large tree, that the frost would rive and rend with a loud crash as if it had been struck by lightning.

Lower down, where the river wound its way amongst the houses of the city, the scene indeed was totally changed, though it was hardly less singular. Here the Thames was, to all intents and purposes, neither more nor less than one broad, handsome thoroughfare, dividing London and Westminster from Southwark, the whole of which was thronged, as much as ever the Park was on a summer-Sunday, with a mass of people, on foot and in sleds, on horseback and in carriages, walking, sledding, riding, and driving, amidst regularly-formed streets of booths and other temporary build-

ings. The gaiety and bustle of this ice-fair went far beyond any similar exhibition upon the land, for here the novelty of the scene brought together the extremes of society, with all the intermediate grades, while the amusements were equally multifarious. Shops might be seen of every description, in all the bustle of business, augmented even to an unusual degree by the strangeness of buying and selling under such circumstances. All kinds of amusement, too, were going on with as much, if not more, license than at any other times. In one part might be seen that notorious rogue, Punch, the original Don Juan, fighting, kissing, cheating, and finally being carried off by the grand executor of justice, the devil, in recompense of his numerous iniquities. Not far off, a large painted cloth informed the curious that, within, the celebrated fire-eater, Richardson, had established himself, the said scroll further stating in goodly characters, each an inch long, how this wonderful man would vomit forth flames like Etna—broil beef-steaks upon his tongue over a fire of lighted charcoal—cook oysters in the

same oven till their shells gaped from very desire to be eaten—melt wax, pitch, and sulphur together, which delicate composition he would afterwards swallow down while flaming—and take up a red-hot bar of iron with his teeth, not to mention divers others feats, not a whit less wonderful, such as he had exhibited them before the princes and potentates of Europe, as well as the Sublime Porte and the great Cham of Tartary. Next door to this man of fire and flames was a temporary cock-pit, where those who delighted in such recreations might see bulls and bears baited by sundry dogs of established reputation, assisted by other canine debutantes in the same noble art, who had their laurels yet to win, if by some singular good luck they escaped the horns of the one, or the teeth and claws of the other.

In the open air were diversions of another kind, and upon the whole more congenial to the habits of our own days, so slow is the boasted march of human intellect. Horse-races and coach-races were held upon the ice, both excellent sports, the pleasure of which

was not at all lessened—augmented rather—by the severe accidents that occurred from time to time to man and beast from the slipperiness of the arena. As these, however, were all thirsty amusements, and as, indeed, no English recreation can ever be deemed complete without the agreeable supplement of eating and drinking, cook-shops and tippling-shops were found in somewhat more than due proportion to the other establishments, the honest proprietors of which establishments had no cause to complain of the want of customers. That the glory of having shared in such scenes might not be lost to those who had the English malady of cutting and carving their names wherever they go, a printer had set up his office, and there, at the cheap rate of sixpence, the aspirant after durable renown, instead of engraving his initials on the ice, which, in a few weeks would melt, might have printed, under his own eyes, a card bearing testimony to his presence. Many of these memorials, with the date of the year, 1683, have been preserved up to the present day by the laudable zeal of the antiquarians, those exemplary drudges, to

whom romance-writers—ourselves amongst the number—owe more obligations than we are often willing to confess.

But while it was a Carnival, or rather a Bacchanalian triumph, on the water, by land it was a severe judgment upon the people, who, in many parts, perished miserably from the excessive cold, and the want of sufficient food and covering. Several parks of deer also were destroyed, no great cause for lamentation, it may be said, since they only contributed to the enjoyment of the luxurious and the wealthy, who in their comfortable homes were deriding the inclemency of the weather, and even drawing pleasure and amusement from that which was fatal to their less fortunate fellow-creatures ; but the evil did not end here—the more useful kinds of cattle, the cows, and the oxen, and the sheep, as well as the domestic fowls, were swept away by thousands, while even the hardier kinds of plants and herbs, that in general defied the worst severity of winter, now withered away, root and branch, as unresistingly as their more delicate companions. Even in Spain and the more South-

ern parts of Europe the cold was intense to an unusual degree, though, of course, it was not so severely felt as in England.

The gayest part of those gay scenes we were describing but a short time since, took place immediately opposite to the dwelling of the Andalusian. From her windows she could see, and even hear, a great deal of what was passing, and satisfied with this, while as the native of a sunny land she dreaded the bitter cold without, for many days she had remained a willing prisoner in the house. Natural as this arrangement was, it yet proved in the end to be the most unlucky that could have been adopted. By this time the indefatigable Rachael, partly it may be in the hope of gain, but certainly in a still greater measure from a vague feeling of attachment for Maria, had ferreted out the whole of the infamous scheme concocted between Rochester and Mervyn. But now came a difficulty that, with all her wiliness, she had not for a moment anticipated; knock when she would at the Andalusian's, the door was opened only to refuse her admittance, and closed again upon her by the surly porter

with as much haste and lack of ceremony as though she had been a beggar from the streets come for the hundredth time to solicit alms. Nor did it fare a jot better with her when she attempted to convey the same intelligence by means of writing; scrawl after scrawl was despatched, sometimes by one messenger, sometimes by another, but though all, according to the report brought back, had been faithfully delivered to the porter, and received by him without objection, still to none of those mis-sives did she obtain any answer. It was evident then to one so quick-witted as the Jewess that none had reached the hand they were intended for, and that some secret influence was at work in the Andalusian's household, unknown to herself, while Perez, the only person who would have been willing and able to counteract it, was lying on the bed of sickness, without the power of moving or attending to any thing. Worse than this, the next day, as she had picked out by some means, was appointed for the wedding, so that there was little, or no, time left to devise a remedy for the evil, even supposing it to be capable of one. Astute as she was, the Jewess

had for once met her match, and, despairing of gaining admission into the house either for herself or her letters, she resolved to watch for the nuptial party on the road-side close to Richmond, with the intention of fully exposing the conspirators, though Charles and his whole Court should be present. The truth is that from being baffled and outwitted she had at last come to make the case her own, as many other crafty folks have done on the like occasions, and it must have been no ordinary bribe that would now have tempted her to forego her purpose.

A trivial chance, growing out of the weather and the consequent state of the roads, most unexpectedly defeated this plan of Rachael's, who indeed by some odd fatality seemed to be always more successful when her purpose was for evil than when it was well-intentioned. The morning of the nuptials, although cold as ever, proved to be exceedingly bright and fine, the fog dispersing on the sudden and leaving the wide expanse of ice and snow glittering far and near, on tree and on house-top, as if the touch of some fairy wand had converted every thing

into crystals. The brightness of the day had its usual effect upon Maria, whose warm Southern blood had stagnated under the influence of mist and vapour. All at once her spirits rose to the highest degree of the thermometer, and a strange fancy, originating most likely in the scenes daily and hourly before her eyes, on a sudden possessed her of riding over the ice to Richmond. Mervyn, it is true, remonstrated against so dangerous a frolic, but his opposition only served, as it generally did, to confirm his bride in her purpose; so she willed it, and so therefore it must be. Accordingly at the early hour of nine they set forth, it being an equal chance that one or other of them, though both rode well, would break a neck before the close of the journey, for if they escaped a fall where the ice was smoothest and most slippery, they had a peril of the same kind to encounter from the rough hillocks into which it had frozen in other parts. But, as a Mahomedan would say, it was written on their foreheads that they should meet with no accident; and, although they experienced not a few hair-breadth escapes—that greatly annoyed, if they

did not alarm, Mervyn, while they only added fresh zest to the enjoyment of the high-spirited Andalusian—fate, or destiny, or whatever else we are to call it, safely handed them over rough and smooth, over hillock and level, till they at last reached Richmond, which they entered below the hill while the Jewess was patiently awaiting them at the town-entrance.

The cheek of Maria glowed with this unusual exercise, and truly did the bridegroom whisper to himself he had never seen her look half so lovely in the crowd of blazing ball-rooms as she did at this moment, every feature radiant with health and joy, and speaking the purity of the inward spirit.

“Isabelle!” she said, patting, as she dismounted, the head of her gallant bay, who seemed to acknowledge and rejoice in her caresses—“Isabelle, ma mie, there is the true Andalusian blood in your veins, although your sire did come from the wolds of Yorkshire. Not that I would just now say ought against your English climate, Mervyn. Such a day might almost make a Southern like myself forget the blessings of a bright sun and blue

skies, and marry her liking to your winter, though his bite is of the sharpest."

It had been agreed, as we have already seen, that the marriage should be strictly private, and, according to these previous arrangements, the bride-maids, and a single friend to give away the lady, were to meet them in the church, that so they might avoid that publicity which assuredly would have been given to the affair had the whole party gone together. Great therefore was the surprise, and not less the indignation, of Maria, when, on passing the porch-door, she found herself in the midst of a numerous assemblage, furred up indeed to the throat, but as brave as diamonds and feathers could possibly make them. Every pew and every seat, above as well as below, was crowded, leaving only a narrow passage up the centre-aisle; and, to render this surprise still more unpalatable, she recognised amongst them the familiar faces of many, both male and female, who were then considered the leaders of the fashion. Between rage and astonishment she was absolutely rooted to the spot. Mervyn too appeared to be scarcely less em-

barrassed, though undoubtedly from some other cause, but, in the guilelessness of her heart, taking this confusion for a sure token of his being no party to the trick, she resumed his arm that she had dropt but a moment before, and advanced with a firm step towards the altar. Even the detested appearance of Buckingham and Rochester and the rest of that party, who stood close by, failed to shake her composure for a single instant, although the smiles they exchanged on her approach were full of deep meaning, and that meaning, mischief. — “Never,” thought she to herself, “never shall they have it to say that their malice faced me down like some bashful rustic, who in her ignorance of the world and its ways is to be stared out of countenance. No such triumph shall they gain over Maria de los Dolores, *that* I promise them, the cold-blooded half-witted Islanders, as dull as their own November, and as sour as the poor berries that they miscall grapes. If they gape, I can stare; if they smile, I can laugh; if they whisper, I can speak aloud.”—And bracing every nerve up to the occasion, she slowly measured all

around in succession with a glance, that made some of the boldest shrink, though without exactly knowing why or wherefore.

In the midst of this triumph of one bold spirit over the many, her eyes, as they travelled from one to the other, were suddenly caught by a sight that drove all the blood in her veins back upon her heart, fixing it there as effectually as the winter had frozen the surface-current of the Thames. This was the semblance of Alfred Trevanion, sculptured the size of life, and fixed upright between two columns at a short distance from the altar. The right hand was pressed against the side, and, from the way in which the figure stood, it seemed to be looking down upon those below, with as deep an expression of agony as the hand of art was capable of throwing into marble. It was indeed one of those master-pieces that seem to hold a middle place between life and death, connecting the two by a link that is not the less sure because it is too fine for sight, and which we may gaze upon till we fancy the stony eye is animated by an existence peculiar to itself. With difficulty she suppressed a

scream of horror at this unlooked-for meeting with one whose fate had caused the bitterest hour of her life, although it was only in the image ; but she did suppress it, although her lips turned to a deadly white, and her whole frame was convulsed with agitation. On the bridegroom, too, the statue appeared to work no less powerfully, but in a far different fashion. His eyes were fixed, as hers, upon the marble, but while he gazed his brow darkened, and his features were sublimed into an expression of hate, defiance, and revenge, such as we might imagine in the Prince of Darkness, when for the first time he looked upon the Heavens from which he had been hurled with the judgment-sign of the Creator upon his forehead. Shaken however as she was to the very centre, Maria observed not these tokens, and at the voice of the priest placed herself almost unconsciously by the side of Mervyn, a faint smile lighting up her pale cheek, like the moon shining whitely on some shattered ruin.

In every face of that numerous assemblage was expressed a degree of interest and curiosity, far beyond what such an occasion would

have seemed to call for. Those even, who were deepest in the designs of the plotters, were as little able to form any idea of how the whole affair would end as the less informed, while the latter, with the exception of a few brought thither by chance, had been collected under dark hints and givings out of something extraordinary that was to happen, and were therefore anxiously awaiting the result. Expectation was thus general, and when the priest made the usual demand from the altar, "if any one knew a just cause or impediment why the two before him should not be joined in the holy bonds of matrimony," the breathing of all around seemed for the moment to be suspended. So deep was the silence that the light plash was distinctly audible of the drops upon the church-windows, as the icicles melted off from the eaves under the transient influence of the sun. But this stillness was soon, and fearfully, broken. Had a voice answered from one of the many graves below, the astonishment could hardly have been greater than it was now, when at the word the bridegroom, flinging her hand from him, exclaimed in tones of thunder—

“I do—I, Julian Trevanion! In me, as from the tomb, speaks out the voice of my murdered brother—in me is heard his spirit denouncing woe to this false syren, who, by the witchery of her tongue and eyes, first lured him on to love, and then bade him despair and die. Up, wretched woman; up from your knees; nor now, nor ever, shall there be a union between us. As you deceived him, so have I deceived you—as you spurned him, so do I spurn you; but more merciful in my just wrath than you were in the triumph of pride and vanity, I do not ask your death—what, indeed, were that but a sounder sleep?—the easy path that children tread as often as age, and never miss the way?—no; may you live rather till the consumption of your own grief kill you—and oh! slow and late may that be! But, come when it will, know that the lives of all your kin, though they were as numberless as your sins, would yet be a poor atonement for the *one* you have so basely sacrificed.”

The Andalusian had listened to him in bewilderment too great to allow of her interrupting him, and now, that his voice had ceased,

she staggered up from her knees and stared about her like one who had just been stunned by a heavy blow, and was endeavouring to collect the scattered senses. Her eye travelled enquiringly from Julian to the priest, and from him again to the by-standers, her mute looks seeming to ask for the reply that she found nowhere.

“Great God!” she at length murmured, though loud enough to be heard by those nearest to her—“is this, indeed, no vision? can it be that any thing with the name and outward seeming of a man should stoop to such infamy?—that the noblest and fairest of all England should look on, and not a voice be raised in censure, or in pity?—that the priest of their worship, false and heretical though it be, should forbear to call down Heaven’s vengeance on this desecration of its altar? But it is not, it cannot be, real. Julian! you whom I have loved so dearly — you, whom I have trusted so blindly—speak to me; say that I only dream, and I will refuse the witness of my own eyes; will deny the evidence of my own ears—any thing, every thing, rather

than believe you what you must be if this is no illusion."

Julian was visibly affected by this passionate appeal—as who, that had a heart to feel, and a head to comprehend, would not have been?—but a mistaken sense of duty was warring in his bosom against his better nature. He looked up to the statue of his brother, as if to gain, from the recollection inspired by it, fresh strength to his wavering resolution, working himself up to fury, as the wild beast is said to do before he springs.

"No," he replied; "you do not dream; 'tis now that you are truly waking—waking as the sinner shall do on the last day, when, at the trumpet-call, he lifts his head, heavy with long guilt, and in vain would find a resting-place."

"Let me plead for the lady," said Buckingham, the sneer on his lips giving a bitter contradiction to the softness of his speech; "her good name, else, is gone for ever."

"Forget not the Isle of Wight," said Rochester. "By my faith, Julian, if you make not the Señora your wife, scandal will not hesitate to call her your mistress."

"And I, too," said Sedley, "must be an intercessor. "True or not, there is nothing short of matrimony will stop the people's tongues now they have once been set a-going."

"Am I amongst men or fiends?" cried the Andalusian. "And you, women at least in form, can you stand idly by, when one of your own sex, against whom none can reproach a fault, is being worried to death by these bandogs as the bull is baited in the arena? But think not, any of you, that these drops fall from my eyes for the wrong—the foul, unmanly wrong, you have done to me. No, Julian; it is for you I shed these tears of sorrow when I should weep only the burning tears of indignation. Oh, Julian! Julian! how has the fine gold become dim!—how has the lustre been quenched of as bright a jewel as ever glittered in the coronet of honour! From my inmost soul I pity even while I despise you. If a human heart yet throbs in your body, what a bitter day have you been preparing for yourself—a day that shall have no end but with life, for rest assured that sin is linked to remorse and shame with such strong bonds, that

death alone can sunder them. When you come to learn—but no; not now, not here; time and place both will be, till when enjoy, as you may, the recollection of this morning; tell it over in your wine-cups; repeat it to your brother soldiers; say how bravely you trampled upon a woman and a stranger in your land, who had none to protect, none to avenge her; boast how nobly, how valiantly you lied—lied like a thief in the night—to win admission to the heart you meant to break, as he does into the house that he would plunder.”

Julian did indeed begin to look like the thief described, so far as a hanging down of the head and a reluctance to meet the gaze of his accuser might be thought to justify the comparison. Even Rochester and Buckingham became sensible that they were fast sinking into a minority, and affected a scornful smile of triumph, much as a beaten party is apt to sing Pœans by way of covering its defeat. But the Andalusian had been too deeply wounded to heed any of them, and she turned to the statue of the suicide as if he alone would or could protect her.

"Image of the unhappy Alfred!" she exclaimed. "Oh, that I could call his spirit hither, though but for a single moment!—that I could bid his eyes light up those sightless sockets—his will impart motion to those stony limbs!—his voice breathe through those marble lips to tell this weak, bad man what he is, and what he must be—"

She suddenly stopped short in terror, a feeling that was fully shared by most of those around, for the statue visibly bent forward as if in answer to the appeal. They who were nearest started back instantly, and well for them they did so, for, before a tongue could be loosened in the way of warning, down came the marble with a tremendous crash, by its weight and the force of the fall shivering, though itself broken, the thin slab that covered the grave of Alfred immediately below the columns. A general scene of terror and confusion followed. Some rushed out of the church with very little regard to the convenience, or even the safety, of their neighbours, in the dread that a judgment was at hand, which, if they stayed, might overtake the

innocent with the guilty. Many of the women cried, and clasped their hands in vague alarm, which, objectless as it was, kept them rooted to the spot. Others there were, who, being less timid or more curious, in vain endeavoured to press forward to the altar, that they might see with their own eyes what was going on.

All in one way or another were deeply interested or agitated by the scene, if we except Rochester and Buckingham, who, true to their character, maintained there was nothing for surprise in the whole affair—"The hard frost," they said, "could rive oaks, and why not affect stone, when the cramps, being badly fastened, had given way, and the statue, as a natural consequence, had fallen?" How this may be, we know not, but what Hamlet replied to his sceptical fellow-student seems not wholly inapplicable to the question—

"There are more things in Heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

CHAPTER XI.

Know,
There is a rose-lipp'd seraph sits on high,
Who ever bends his holy ear to earth
To mark the voice of penitence, to catch
Her solemn sighs, to tune them to his harp.

MASON.

WE are told in the Apocalypse of a book that was honey to the mouth in the act of being eaten, but gall to the taste when it was swallowed. This beautiful allegory, though intended for another type, not unaptly symbolizes the course of human vengeance. We pursue the object for weeks, for months, for years, 'till time has brewed the deadly draught, and occasion presents it to our lips, when we

gulp it down, only to find that, however delicious at the moment, it leaves behind it bitterness and disgust intolerable. So it was with Julian ; nor did he the less feel it because his conduct was treated as a fair retort by those about him, who in court and city circulated many a biting gibe at the expense of his victim ; neither his head nor his heart, now that they had once more fair play, were to be so convinced. Worse than this, his ardent love for the Andalusian, which had been with difficulty kept under by the thirst of revenge 'till it was slaked and satisfied, now gained the mastery that of right belonged to it and possessed him wholly. It was in vain he said to himself, "This woman brought death both to my brother and my mother, since the suicide of the one, occasioned by her cruelty, broke the heart of the other, and therefore the shame inflicted upon her has been a light and fitting punishment." Such opiates had no power to lull the inward monitor to rest, who, had he otherwise been inclined to sleep, could hardly have done so, with the torch of love blazing in his eyes. Willingly would he have made the only repa-

ration in his power by marriage, but the doors of the Andalusian were closed against all his efforts, and his letters, though taken in, uniformly remained without an answer.

The mind of Maria was, if possible, even more severely agitated than that of her penitent lover, while she was a thousand times more to be pitied, as her sufferings, unlike his, proceeded from no fault of her own. The insult had wrought deeply upon her susceptible imagination, and the wound, instead of healing, grew worse with time, till even sleep seemed to be well nigh banished from her pillow. Not the least of her tortures was that she could not help still loving the unworthy cause of them. The body too suffered, as might have been expected, under this war of conflicting passions, till her pale cheek and wasted form gave her all the appearance of one in a rapid decline, and this fatal resemblance became yet more striking from the increased fire and brilliance of her eyes. Whole days would she sit, without speaking a word to any one, much to the grief of honest Perez, who, ill as he was, had been roused from his

sick bed by the tales of the domestics, for they could get neither orders, nor answers to the few inquiries they hazarded in the lack of them. Fortunate was it for Julian that his earlier rebuffs kept him aloof from the house, for, had he shown himself, now that the old man was up again, he had full surely received a Spanish knife in his body.

But he, with whom all this mischief had in a great measure originated, the unprincipled and profligate Earl of Rochester, was also called upon to suffer, and to learn, when too late, that to give free way to our vices is something like letting loose a set of wild beasts, who, if for a while they worry others, are equally sure in the end to fall upon their owners. For eight weeks he had been stretched on the bed of pain and sickness, and now, only in his thirty-third year, was told by his physician, the celebrated Radcliffe, that there was no hope for him—he must make up his mind in a few days at the farthest to quit the world and all the vanities to which he had been so fatally attached. This fiat, pronounced by one who was justly held the oracle of the day, and con-

firmed, moreover, by his own feelings, struck as much terror into the heart of the voluptuary as ever was infused into the soul of Richard by the fearful visions of the night preceeding the day of battle. It seemed to him that a gulf, which widened every hour and every minute, was fast cutting him off from the world he loved so well, while before him all was doubt, and darkness, and dismay. No wonder then if at once, and without any intermediate gradations, he became truly penitent, for, much as we may lament it, the fear of hell makes more converts than the love, or even the hope, of Heaven.

Of all the friends who had shared the folly and extravagance of his dissolute hours, there was not one who thought of him now that he was struck down by disease, and his powers of enlivening their dullness by his wit had deserted him. Cherry-Nob, if in his subordinate station he could be called a friend, was the only exception to this renewed illustration of the ancient maxim; he, indeed, was truly assiduous in his visits,—as much so as if he had been one of the dying man's creditors,

and feared that death might step in and cheat him of his bond if he did not make the greater haste. Though repulsed a dozen times, he still persisted in his calls regularly as the morning and evening came round, till in the end his constancy procured for him admission. But, as that sagacious character was never known really to care for any one except himself, nor to be much in the habit of doing good gratuitously, it is only fair to conclude that he did not knock so regularly at the sick man's door without an eye to his own interest. No doubt he recollected the Earl could not carry his gold with him, and that, if he had little to give, he had still that not uncommon quality of temper which disposes a man rather to be generous than just. On his part, Rochester, though he well knew the captain was a knave in grain, not only tolerated, but soon began to like him, upon the same principle that the owner of a surly, ill-conditioned dog will patronize his four-footed dependent, notwithstanding his defects of form and temper, simply because the beast appears attached to himself. Accordingly through nearly eight weeks of painful sickness,

with all its attendant discomforts, had Cherry-Nob found himself a welcome visitor at the Earl's bed-side, and it is saying something for the versatility of his mood—we fear it must not be called talent—that he, who could make himself acceptable to the volatile Andalusian in the Isle of Wight, was now hailed as a relief from the ennui of a sick chamber.

It was the next day after the sudden revolution, just alluded to, had taken place in the mind of Rochester, that the captain came upon his usual visit, and had his hand upon the door-lock to give himself admission, when he was checked in his purpose by hearing a solemn sound within, that, had it come from any other quarter, he would have decidedly pronounced to be the voice of some one in prayer. He listened awhile, with his ear at the key-hole,—such an act, however scouted in general, being by no means forbidden by his liberal creed—when, to his infinite astonishment, he heard Rochester pouring forth a fervid supplication in tones that well attested his sincerity :

“Praised,” it was thus he began, with clasped hands and streaming eyes,—“Praised for ever

be thy name, O Lord, for that thou hast vouchsafed of thy great goodness and mercy to turn my heart from evil, and to show me the error of my ways. Accept, I beseech thee, the prayer and acknowledgment of a contrite sinner, and judge me not after thy justice, which is terrible, but according to thy love, which is infinite. Let thy light shine on the dark path before me, that I err not, and let thy strong hand uphold me that I may not fall; for who without Thee shall walk upright, or who, if thou guidest him not, but shall go astray?"

More there was, but a subject so solemn is hardly suited to these light pages. Even this was enough to confound all the Captain's ideas of one whom he had only known as the most abandoned profligate of a time when, according to his own account of it, hypocrisy was the only vice that was going to decay, for "few men dissembled their being rascals, and no woman disowned her total want of virtue." So irreconcilable was this penitent vein with his previous habits that the Captain at once

jumped to the conclusion of his being light-headed, and drew back in great alarm.

“He must be delirious—absolutely delirious. Rochester praying! I should as soon suspect one of our bishops of fiddling, or the Lord Chancellor of dancing a bransle in his wig and robes. The fever must have got up into his brain, that’s certain. If I venture upon him in this fit, I shall have a chair, or a poker, or some such missile extraordinary, sent at my head; and your fever-folks are always so vengeance-strong. I’ll go call Doctor Radcliffe.”

Fortunately the doctor was in the house, where indeed he was now in attendance nearly half the day, in the vague hope of catching at some chance of saving his patient, much as a counsel watches for the turning up of a flaw or accident in favour of his client, who, he well knows, is otherwise full surely condemned to death. Though scarcely less surprised than the Captain, he was too used to cope with frenzy in all its shapes to be afraid of it in a case where it had assumed the quiet form of devotion. He instantly complied with the summons, and, curiosity, prevailing over fear, which

was besides considerably diminished by the presence of such an ally, Cherry-Nob followed him to the side of the sick-bed, where they found the patient lying on his back, his teeth closely set, and the cold sweat of agony on his forehead.

“How do you find yourself now?” asked Radcliffe in his usual blunt manner.

“Bad enough in body,” replied the patient, turning a languid eye upon him; “I am suffering pangs unutterable. But it is far otherwise with my mind. Oh, doctor! within me is a calm that more than makes amends for all that this vile flesh may endure. Were it ten times more than it is, I have deserved it all—all.”

“Humph!” said Radcliffe, looking at him steadily.

Rochester returned him a faint, painful smile, as he replied in answer to the doubts expressed in that emphatic monosyllable,—“I can read what is passing in your mind; but for once your sagacity is at fault; I am not mad; on the contrary, it is only now that I have come to my senses, and have learnt to know that our lives are but marches to our graves. I was mad when I wasted youth and health in idle riot—

mad, when for a brief hour of pleasure I well nigh bartered eternal happiness—and doubly mad, when I followed Court and King, and plumed myself upon their empty favour. Oh, doctor! they, who would be great in our little world, seem to me as ridiculous as schoolboys, who with much endeavour, and some danger, climb a crab-tree, venturing their necks for fruit which solid pigs would disdain if they were not starving. Take these reflections to your heart, my friend; how idle soever they may seem to the busy, they may, if well considered, save you many a weary step in the day, and help you to many an hour's sleep, which you would otherwise want in the night."

He was silent from exhaustion, and the doctor continued gazing at him with that wonder and pity which health so often feels when looking at the sick and dying. The sunken eye, the thin piping voice, the yellow white of the cheek and brow, the lips drawn back from the teeth, the emaciated hands that the light almost shines through, and the trembling play of the spider-like fingers when they attempt to hold any thing,—all combine to present a spec-

tacle scarcely less distressing to the eye than the corpse itself. The goodly bark, dismasted and shorn of its rigging, with every plank torn from its naked ribs, differs not more from the same vessel with every sail bent to the breeze, than does the healthy man from himself when sickness has stretched him upon his bed, and the soul is ready to part from the crazed and broken body. So forcibly did this idea strike Radcliffe, albeit long used to such scenes, that he could not help exclaiming, "Can this indeed be the gay and witty Rochester?"

"He is somewhat changed from what he was," said Rochester; "but Heaven can as easily blast an oak as a mushroom. There was something though I had to say—what was it, doctor? my memory begins to fail me sadly. Will no one tell me?"

This was said peevishly, and the next moment he cried like a vexed child, so completely was that once gay and vigorous mind broken down by pain and sickness.

"What is it you want?" asked Radcliffe, observing that he fumbled about the pillow as if in search of something he was unable to get at.

"The keys—the keys of the ebony cabinet," replied the Earl; "they should be under my pillow, if they have not been stolen from me when I was sleeping."

"Nonsense, man," said Radcliffe roughly, but not unkindly; "let me search for them—I told you so; here they are, safe enough; and now they are found, what use is to be made of them?"

"Use!" repeated Rochester, his mind again beginning to waver.—"Oh, aye; I recollect. Unlock yonder cabinet; in the right hand drawer you will find a small packet tied with black ribband."

"Very good," said Radcliffe; "but first swallow this draught, or we shall have you fainting presently."

And taking a small vial from his pocket, he emptied the contents of it into a wine-glass that stood ready on the table by the bed-side, and presented it to the patient.

"It is hard," said Rochester, "that one never can see you without being poisoned with these filthy messes."

"Very hard," replied Radcliffe. "You'll take it notwithstanding."

And so completely had he established his controul over the Earl's mind, that he gulped down the unwelcome draught, and sank back again upon his pillow, making faces expressive of strong disgust.

"Bitter enough, I dare say," cried Radcliffe, observing these refractory symptoms. "But never mind; you'll find the benefit of it in a few minutes, and you seem to have work to go through that will ask help of some kind."

"Nothing, save those papers," replied the Earl.

Without another word, Radcliffe opened the cabinet, and found, in the right-hand drawer, a small packet exactly tallying with the description given.

"This is what you want, is it not?"

"The very thing," said Rochester, beckoning Cherry-Nob to his bed-side; and that worthy, who had hitherto been silent, more from prudence than inclination, stepped hastily forward, in the full assurance that the time was at hand which was to recompense him for all his pains and labour.

"I am dying," said Rochester.

"Not a bit of it," replied the Captain, a lie at all times coming most readily to his tongue,—
"No more dying than I am."

Rochester smiled, in spite of himself, at this exemplification of the ruling passion.

"Well, be that as it may, I have business for you, that will bring you either gold or a sound drubbing, according as you discharge it."

At these two talismanic words, which were in fact the Alpha and Omega of his moral alphabet, the captain pricked up his ears.

"Deliver this packet into the hands of the Señora de los Dolores—mind, into her own hands and no others. Say, that as the nearest relative of Lady Trevanion—her eldest son, Julian, was abroad at the time of her death—I became possessed of these amongst less valuable papers. You will bring back a written acknowledgment from the Señora of their receipt. Failing this,"—and he rose up in bed with an energy, that nothing but the impulse of some strong passion could have lent his attenuated frame—"failing this, I will have you cudgelled within an inch of your life;

return with the acknowledgment, and twenty gold pieces shall be your reward."

Again he fell back upon his pillow, and as he lay there, panting from the exertion, he murmured to himself, though loud enough to be heard by Radcliffe, "It is the only reparation I can offer; let her deal with it as she pleases."

Stimulated by the double incentive, of stout crab-tree stick on the one hand, and red gold on the other, the captain pursued his way to the house of the Andalusian, without giving a thought to the palpable difficulties in the way of his commission. When, however, he reached the end of his travel, sundry misgivings crossed him as to the reception he was likely to meet with, supposing, as was far from improbable, that his share in the Isle of Wight should have been unluckily divulged. But what was to be done? Rochester, he well knew, would keep his word, ill as he was, and would do so were it to the last hour of his life, notwithstanding his penitent fit, or perhaps the rather for it, since it was plain he for some cause or other considered the safe

delivery of the packet as an act of atonement for his practices against the Andalusian. As the least, therefore, of two evils, he at last plucked up courage to knock at the door, which, much to his dismay, was opened by Perez, looking fiercer, and more gaunt than ever, from his recent ague. The stern Cerberus, as he had expected, was by no means disposed to admit him, though willing enough to take the packet, which he did not dare to part with. This very recusancy on this point made the old man doubly suspicious of his purpose, nor was the latter at all moved by his piteous representations of what would inevitably be the consequences to himself if he did not fulfil the Earl's commission to the very letter. The grim janitor continued inflexible. Placed thus between Sylla and Charybdis, the captain took courage from desperation, and rushing by his enemy into the house and almost upsetting him in his passage, he made his way to the room where the Andalusian sate alone with her grief, long before the other could set his foot upon the stair-case.

"Take it," he exclaimed, thrusting the

packet into the passive hand of the astonished Dolores, while he was all but breathless from the speed of his flight—"Rochester dying!—take it—brain me if you don't—gold, and crab-tree cudgel."

By this time Perez, backed by the other domestics, whom he had summoned to his aid, made his appearance, all being armed with pokers, knives, mop-sticks, and other heterogeneous weapons of offence, such as the Tower-armoury presents no models of, but not the less sufficiently dangerous in willing hands. The sight and tumult seemed all at once to restore Maria to her wonted energies, or it may be that the mental frost, which had so long chained up all her faculties, was of itself ready to give way, and needed but the slightest impulse from without to break it up entirely.

"What does this mean?" she exclaimed, stepping forward hastily, and still holding the packet, though, as it seemed, without being conscious of its possession.

Perez replied by explaining in high indignation the forcible entry of the Captain, who

continually interrupted his narrative by earnest and vehement iterations of—

“Read it, Señora—read it—I shall have every bone in my body broken else.”

“Man!” said Dolores, “of whom, or of what, are you speaking?”

“Rochester, Señora—Rochester—for Heaven’s love, read it.”

“From Rochester?” she repeated—“and by your hands?—the messenger is worthy of the sender, and the message, no doubt, is worthy of both. When evil is plotted, it is not fit that any should be good, who are of counsel to it.”

“I’ll not stir from the spot,” cried Cherry-Nob, now fully desperate—“not a step move I till you have read it. As well stay and be cudgelled by your serving-men, as be beaten to death by the Earl’s myrmidons, and most assuredly I shall be if I go without the answer I have come for.”

The Andalusian seemed about to dash the papers through the window, but some sudden change of feeling arrested her hand, and after a moment’s hesitation she broke the seal and began to read. And well did the contents

repay her for this sacrifice of passion to judgment. As she went on with the perusal, her eyes sparkled, every feature became animated, and a smile of bitter triumph mantled on her lips. So marked, indeed, was the change that it challenged the attention of all present, obtuse as their faculties might be. In his heart the Captain likened her to a beautiful fiend, while the devoted Perez rejoiced to see his mistress once again alive to the feelings of this world, for the marble calmness of the last two months and more had alarmed him for her sanity.

Having finished the letter, which appeared to be brief, considering its evident importance, she flung her purse to the Captain, exclaiming in a tone of the deepest contempt, "There is your pay, fellow; I would not receive the slightest service at such base hands, and have it set down to me as an obligation."

Cherry - Nob pocketed the gold and the affront at the same time without hesitation.

"But the acknowledgment, Señora — the acknowledgment. If I go back to the Earl without a voucher of some kind, he will full surely set his myrmidons upon me, and one

man is no match for a score, though he be as stout as George a' Green, or the Pindar of Wakefield."

"I hope and trust," said the Andalusian eagerly, "that he may break every bone in your skin, for in so doing he will spare me a labour. Turn the fellow out, Perez; and, as you value my service, see that he never darkens door-way of mine again."

The valiant Captain would fain have resisted the execution of this command, but in spite of all his efforts he was most ignominiously ejected, his reluctance to the ceremony only serving as an excuse for sundry kicks and cuffs that Perez bestowed upon him with right good-will. That excellent personage, following in the rear of those who were dragging him out, did not cease to spurn him with his sharp-pointed shoes, and belabour his head and shoulders with a broom-stick, till he was fairly thrust into the street, and the hall-door closed against him.

Scarcely had the Major-domo offered this sop to his revengeful spirit, than another visitant appeared, in the person of the Jewess, Rachael. She however had the good-fortune

to find favour in his sight in consequence of her late attempt to serve his mistress at Richmond, and it was therefore with little difficulty he granted her the admission she claimed, upon matters, as she affirmed, of the utmost importance to the Señora de los Dolores.

"I bring," said the Jewess mysteriously—"I bring your mistress the means of vengeance on her enemy!"

"Of vengeance?" said the old man, repeating the word in tones that told how dear the feeling was to his heart: "'tis the sweetest morsel that fate can offer. Come in, come in; you may perchance find my lady in the mood to hear you now. Had your visit been half an hour earlier, I know not what answer I must have yielded you."

The Jewess followed the old man, who on coming to the chamber-door declined announcing her, drily observing, "Now I think of it again, she may perhaps order you to be turned out, and in that case you will be a gainer of so much time, by my absence, as it will take me to ascend the stairs again. I will not hurry myself."

Rachael, much too stout-hearted to be moved

from her purpose by these ominous hints, presented herself unannounced, and met with a reception that seemed fully to justify them. At her entrance Maria started and angrily asked, "Are you too an ambassador from Wilmot, Earl of Rochester?"

"From the devil as soon," replied the Jewess, "from whom he came, and to whom he is going full speed, if all they say be true. My curses on his head, and may their weight help him the downward path all the quicker!"

"And what then brings you hither?" said Maria in the same tone of suspicion.

"What brings me hither?" retorted the Jewess. "Have you forgotten, or did you think that I forgot, my promise on the banks of yonder river, when the ban-dogs had me by the throat, and you saved me from their gripe? Twice have I tried to quit my debt,—not with gold indeed, for gold the Jewess could not yield, though to the mother who had borne her, or the child, who had slept beneath her heart—but with that which is beyond the price of the bright metal, or the sparkle of the brighter diamond—with faithful service."

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"I want no service that you can render me," said Maria coldly.

"Do you want revenge?" replied the Jewess.

"Ha!" exclaimed the Andalusian.

"Deadly revenge?" continued the Jewess, without noticing the exclamation—"such as shall make him curse the hour in which he saw the light!"

"On Julian?" said the Andalusian.

"On Julian," was the reply.

A deep pause followed. Each seemed to labour under some secret awe that made her unwilling to give utterance to her dark imaginations.

"Say on," at length murmured Maria in a voice subdued almost to a whisper.

"Have you never heard of poisoned masks?" replied Rachael in the same tone. "You are a Spaniard, and come from the birth-place of its invention."

Maria shuddered, but made no answer. The Jewess repeated the question.

"Have you never heard of such things, Señora?"

“They scorch up and distort the features,” said Maria, “so that the mother, who bore the victim, would not know him. Is it not so?”

“The change you speak of does but faintly image the workings of this dreadful poison on the human feature. The mother, say you?—Heaven itself would not recognise its own creation. Once—only once—have I seen it used, when the wretched victim—it was a woman—went mad at her own reflexion in the mirror. And no wonder! a sight so loathsome, so horrible, passes language to describe, or imagination to conceive it. Even I—I who have been in the Eastern lazaret-house, where the hideous lepers dwell cut off from the society of their kind—I, who, in my dreams, if not in my waking hours, have looked upon the fiend himself—I turned away well nigh blasted by the sight, and fled as the chased deer flies from the dogs of the hunter.”

Again there was a long pause, as fearful as that which fills up the time to Lady Macbeth when her husband is about the murder, though, instead of night, it was broad day, and the sun shone out sparkingly on the huge ice-blocks

that the breaking up of the frost sent floating down the river. The Andalusian was deadly pale, and her voice faltered as at length she asked, "Know you how to prepare this mask?"

"It is already prepared," said the Jewess, drawing from beneath her cloak a black silk mask that had no apparent difference from other contrivances of the same kind, except that the inside was tinted with a shade of green, so slight as not to be perceived but on close inspection. "I came not here to talk of what might be, but to put at once into your hands the ripened means of vengeance. If you have the heart to use it, so; if not, bear with your shame as best you may; remain a story and a jest to court and city,—be the scoff of every ribald tongue, —when one brave act of revenge would turn all their gibes into cries of wonder and lamentation.—God of Abraham and of Isaac!" she continued in yet more impassioned tones,—“ere I would sit down under such disgrace as is now your portion, they should heap coals of living fire upon my head.”

For once the proud spirit of the Andalusian appeared to be quelled and baffled. She took the mask, which was still held out to her, and in a faint voice bade the Jewess depart—"But till to-morrow, my good Rachael. There are thoughts passing in my brain, that—to-morrow, Rachael—to-morrow."

CHAPTER XII.

Heaven oft hath bade,
E'en when its will seem'd writ in lines of blood,
Th' unthought event disclose a whiter meaning.

GRAY.

ALL was now bustle in the house of Dolores, that for so many months before might have been, from its extreme quiet, a monastery of Carthusians. By the interposition of the King, who for once had been faithful to his word, her suit had prospered in the court of Chancery, whereupon she had immediately disposed of the estate that fell to her in consequence, given notice to her English domestics that their services would not be required be-

yond the month, and made every necessary preparation for her return to Spain. At the same time she issued invitations to all her acquaintance, none excepted, for a farewell ball—her LAST BALL—which, like that already mentioned, was to be masked. Never had the curiosity of that circle, which then, as now, arrogated to itself the title of the fashionable world, been more generally excited. Since the affair at Richmond, she had been accessible to none except those of her own household, and scarcely even to them; she had therefore all the gloss of novelty upon her, and every one was anxious to see with his own eyes, and hear with his own ears, how so proud a spirit would act under such circumstances, which inferred shame, if not disgrace. “How would she meet her acquaintance?—what would she say?—was she making this opportunity to justify herself publicly to the world?”—were questions buzzed about on all sides, and variously replied to according to the tempers of those who generously took upon themselves the task of explaining matters of which, in reality, they knew nothing.

The Jewess alone was aware that a deadly purpose lurked beneath these festive preparations, yet even she began to have some misgivings as to its real nature. The strong passion, which Maria would at times express for Julian, agreed indifferently with her threats at others, and it was plain that she had either not yet made up her mind to any certain line of conduct, or that she had some object in view she did not think proper to confess. Subtle as were the questions proposed by the Jewess in hopes of getting at the heart of this mystery, she could learn nothing for some time but what greatly added to her doubts, till at last the truth flashed all at once upon her, as it has often done on much deeper philosophers, and on topics more worthy of investigation. The secret, however, lost none of its mystery in her possession ; from motives, which will shew themselves hereafter, not a syllable did she breathe of her suspicion to any one, though the Andalusian might possibly have guessed such a thing from her extreme anxiety to get back the mask into her own possession. A hundred pretexts did she start with this view,

urging above all that she had reason to think the medicament was defective, and offering to renew the preparation with more care and attention in the process. All was to no purpose. Maria, either from jealousy of the actual truth, or merely from that wilfulness which formed so prominent a feature of her character, refused, even for a single moment, to part with it out of her own hands.

"So help me the God of Abraham and of Isaac," said Rachael, "as you wrong me by this denial. Why do you distrust me?"

"I distrust every one of woman born," replied Maria, "and you, I suppose, make no higher pretension. Methinks, too, you can hardly complain of me in this matter, for when have I met with other than deceit? whom have I fed with my bounty, or taken to my heart of love, that has not, sooner or later, played me false?"

The Jewess hung her head, for at these words came across her the recollection of her own treachery in the earlier period of their acquaintance. When she did reply, her voice had none of its usual coarse boldness—

"It is but too true, Señora; your rebuke touches many, myself amongst the number. Yet, whatever I may have been, now, at least, I mean you fairly—more fairly, perhaps, than you mean yourself."

"It may be so, Rachael; but slow credit is the child of knowledge, and you must grant mine has been pretty extensive in the evil of the world."

"If there be deceit in my heart towards you," said the Jewess, solemnly, "may I be blotted out of the Book of the Living."

"Let us drop the subject, Rachael; my belief, were it all that you would have it, alters not my purpose."

"Even so are the blind wiser than the children of light," muttered the Jewess; "but I will save thee if—"

Before she could finish the sentence, she was interrupted by Perez bringing in a letter.

"From Captain Trevanion," said the old man, presenting it to his mistress with one of those grim smiles that usually bespoke his highest degree of dissatisfaction.

"From Julian?" repeated Maria, snatching it from the salver, and eagerly breaking it open.

“ If he should again—ha ! is it so—is it indeed so ?—Say, Perez, to the messenger, that I am too busy—no, that I am too ill, to write—nor that either—say that his master’s request demands time to refuse or grant it ; but I will answer Captain Trevanion in person on the night of my *Last Ball*, if he will honour me”—a bitter smile accompanied the phrase—“ if he will honour me with his presence.”

Perez would fain have availed himself of his usual privilege of giving unasked counsel, and remonstrate against such an invitation, but the fiery glance of her eye showed that she was in no safe mood to trifle with. He smothered his disgust, therefore, and retreated in silence, saying by his looks what he feared to trust his tongue to utter, a compromise between prudence and inclination which he generally had recourse to on such occasions.

“ The finger of Providence sure is in this,” she murmured after reading the letter a second time, and quite forgetting the presence of the Jewess. “ How earnestly he sues for pardon ! how passionately he begs the hand that he flung from him !—And he shall have it too.

But, sooner—aye ten times sooner—shall he wish that he had touched a bar of red-hot iron; the wound had been less fatal.”

“What!” exclaimed the Jewess; “the gale blows from the right quarter, does it? it’s health to my flesh, and marrow to my bones, to hear you say so. But look you make good use of it: the bold and experienced pilot spreads his sails to the wind, when the coward makes all safe in terror of a tempest.”

“You still here?—and a listener?”—said Maria hastily. “But ’tis little matter; the whole of your foggy city shall ere long hear me, and the tale will not be soon or easily forgotten. In the meantime be faithful, be silent; you know that I have the power, and do not lack the will, to recompense fidelity.”

“I will deserve your bounty,” replied the Jewess with a glance of deep and peculiar meaning. “Whether I obtain it, or not, must rest between yourself and your namesake saint; and so farewell, Señora, till the hour of service again calls me to you.”

There was, or Maria fancied there was, a derisive smile upon the lips of the Jewess, as she alluded to the “namesake saint,” that re-

volted her better nature. At the phrase she crossed herself, exclaiming, "Blasphemer!"—a malediction that Rachael took no farther notice of than by quickening her exit from the room, as if fearing to trust her temper with a reply.

"I have done wrong," she said, as the door closed behind this doubtful ally—"great wrong, I fear, in holding such close communion with one of her unbelieving race. And yet what choice had I? from her I have had the service I should in vain have sought at other hands,—at least in this country. But I will do penance for my sin, and that directly. 'Tis now mid-day, and food shall not pass my lips, sleep shall not close my eyes, till the sun has set, and risen, and again set. Sancta Maria, ora pro nobis! ora pro nobis!"

Most rigidly did the Andalusian adhere to her vow, for if her piety was, as some may choose to think, mistaken, it was not the less sincere. But, by one of those contradictions, which are much too common in human nature to surprise us, this act of devotion, so far from inducing a healthier train of thought, had the directly opposite result of confirming her in her schemes

of vengeance. In fact it continued and increased the exaltation of spirits in which her wild idea had originated; that, which had first been suggested by strong passion, was now hallowed to her fancy by religion, or rather by that ferment of feeling which grows out of religion, when carried beyond its proper limits. It is in vain that sober reason would argue upon the reality of notions conceived under such circumstances; in fact half the actions of the ardent lover or furious zealot are madness to the rest of the world; so was Antony mad when he abandoned fame and empire for Cleopatra; and so too was James the Second mad, when he flung away three kingdoms for a mass.

The evening, thus anxiously expected, at length arrived, and again the Andalusian's saloons were filled with the first and fairest of the Court and city. To the great surprise of the visitors, though more than an hour had passed, their hostess had not yet made her appearance, and an old Castilian noble, who in her absence received them, evaded all inquiries with the cold reserve peculiar to his nation. The king, who had been led to grace the festival as much by curiosity as any other

feeling, had, with all his good-humour and general indifference, a touch of royalty in his temper that ill-brooked the crossing of any whim or fancy of the moment. Waxing impatient at this delay he addressed the Spaniard in a manner between request and command—

“Oddsfish, Señor, we have tried long enough to solve this riddle of yours, and are fain to confess ourselves beaten. Expound therefore, or let our hostess come and answer for herself.”

“Let me pray your royal indulgence for a brief space longer,” replied the Castilian gravely; “the blame of this delay belongs not to my fair country-woman.”

“It must be a rare device that needs so much preparation,” said the monarch.

“It will prove so,” answered the Castilian—
“such an one as your Majesty has never seen before, and are never like to see again.”

Before the king could reply, a female figure in a black mask stopt by the group, and holding up her finger to the Castilian, said, with marked emphasis, “He is come !”

“Who is come ?” exclaimed Charles.

But the mask had passed on again and mingled with the crowd.

"Oddsfish," repeated the monarch, "here's mystery enough for another plot, if we had but Oates or any of his confederates here to construe it into good Protestant language."

"The explanation is at hand," rejoined the Castilian.—"Sire,—and you, noble ladies and cavaliers—you once witnessed the wrong—the foul, unmanly wrong—done to my poor country-woman; she now invites you to see how a Spaniard can, and dares, avenge herself. May I crave of you all to follow me?"

There was no necessity for repeating the invitation. The king himself was bursting with curiosity, and his loving lieges were so much agitated by the same absorbing passion that they trod closer on the heels of royalty than strict etiquette would warrant. But it is now necessary to go back a little in our narrative, and take a peep at the preparations behind the curtain.

In the ante-room to a large hall, which she had been in the habit of using for a private chapel, sate Maria in earnest expectation of Julian's arrival. On a marble slab beside her lay the fatal mask, upon which her eyes were constantly fixed, when their attention was not

diverted to the French clock above, and of the two it might be doubted which was the most painful monitor. To her anxious ear there seemed to be something unusually sad and solemn in the tickings of the latter, to which her own pulses audibly responded.

“Has he altered his mind?” she asked herself—“or does he shame to see one whom he has so cruelly wronged?—woe that too late repents!—But how if my resolution, worn out by this delay, should fail me at the last moment?—why not do the deed at once, while my heart is high?—my heart high, did I say?—God help me! I am a poor, weak, timid woman, who is strong only as passion lends her strength, and is all feebleness when the fit has left her.”

She took up the mask, and gazed on it till she almost fancied there was life in the black features and eyeless sockets.

“Thou beautiful deformity!—healthful poison! for even while you rob the face of its loveliness you heal the ulcers of the mind. She, who once indues thee, shall no more sin the sin of vanity or self-love, though she were fair as Egypt’s queen, or rose-lipt as the angels of

the Italian Raphael. Her heart shall belong to Heaven more surely than if she dwelt within a cloister, for temptation may climb walls of stone, or cheat the vigilance of the watchman, but he has no power over those who have made thee their guardian."

Excited by these self-communings she seemed about to put on the mask, but the heart proved too weak for the spirit, and she laid it down again with a deep sigh, given as much to her want of resolution as to the sad destiny that seemed to be closing about her.

"Not yet—not yet—every minute gained is dear to the condemned wretch, who looks upon his executioner."

"Upon the messenger of good tidings rather," said the Jewess, who at this moment entered and had caught the last words; "he is come!"

"How say you?" cried Maria—"that Julian is come?"

"I saw him from the window," replied Rachael; "the torch-light flashed full upon his face, as he came up the street; there was no mistaking him."

At this annunciation the Andalusian snatched up the mask again, and with folded hands, and

eyes uplifted to a small image of the Virgin, breathed a hasty prayer for strength in the hour of trial. Rachael watched her with looks of the deepest interest, and her hard features expressed something like compassion, though it was not altogether unmingled with scorn, as she exclaimed,—“I guessed as much; you think to punish this man without a heart by the sacrifice of your beauty. Believe me, you are mistaken. Long before the ulcers of the poison have dried up, and the wounds have become scars, he will have forgotten you, or at best will think of you when he wants a theme to make him merry.”

“So be it then,” replied Maria, hastily putting on the mask, as if doubtful of her own resolution, and snapping the steel clasp that held it firmly to the face.

“You have done it then?” said the Jewess.

“I have done it!” answered Maria in a voice that was scarcely audible from emotion.

“I pity you,” retorted the Jewess—“so help me the God of my fathers, as I pity you, and *that* is more than I ever yet did for any Christian. Poor fool! you love this man, even as the moth loves the flame, which will destroy it.

But, hark ! I hear his footstep upon the stairs."

It was indeed Julian, who entered almost as soon as the words were out of her mouth, and was received with a profound courtesy, and a "You are late, Captain Trevanion."

"In that," replied Julian, "I am more deserving of pity than reproaches. For the last two hours I have been pacing up and down the street, but, as often as I would have knocked at your door, fear held back my hand ; I could not do it. Ask the accused felon if he would not willingly have another day, another hour, of hope—if he would not rather bear suspense than face at once the judge on whose voice depends his life or death. But St. Paul's struck ten ; I felt the time was come when I could delay no longer ; and now," he added, dropping on his knee, "can you forgive my cruel, my unworthy conduct?"

"Ought I?" said the Andalusian quickly.

"Oh do not—I implore you do not—bid me pronounce sentence against myself ; for what but condemnation can I, dare I, pronounce in answer to such a question ? I may not deny, much less attempt to palliate, what has happened."

"Say, that I should forgive—that I should

once more hold out the hand you so scornfully flung from you?"

"I would bless you," cried Julian, catching her hand and devouring it with kisses—"I would bless you, dearest Maria, as the seaman welcomes the harbour that shows safety to him in the very moment of expected shipwreck."

"Your seaman," retorted Maria, "soon wearies of the friendly port, when the storm has gone down, and the winds are once more favourable. Despite, however, of your halting simile, I am half disposed to let your attachment to a brother excuse the wrong done to myself, and,—but you will laugh though at my woman's weakness—"

"Say on—for Heaven's sake, say on. Believe me, the penance I have endured for the last month—nay more—from that fatal day at Richmond—has been such that neither heart nor brain can hold out against it any longer."

"I will believe you. Rise, sir; you have sued out your pardon, and have no longer any need of kneeling."

"Not so, not so; my pardon is not half complete—what do I say?—it is no pardon at

all, unless accompanied by that without which life itself were not worth the having."

"And what may that be?" asked the Andalusian in a tremulous voice.

"Your heart—your hand," replied Julian passionately.

"If the hand be all that is requisite to your happiness," said Maria, "it is once more yours."

"My best!—my dearest one!" exclaimed Julian, starting to his feet. "But let me remove that envious mask which divides me from your dear lips—let me seal upon your cheek the bridal kiss."

"Aye, when the bridal blessing has been pronounced," said Maria, repulsing him gently but firmly. "If your impatience be such as you paint it, the altar is ready, and the priest waits, in the adjoining chamber."

Julian gazed on her like one thunder-struck at this announcement. It might be mere surprise, it might be excess of joy, that kept him silent, but past occurrences had taught the Andalusian to be jealous of his intentions, and her whole frame shook with agitation, as she said, "Have you again asked my hand only to fling it from you when given?"

"As soon would I fling from me health, or sight, or any other valued blessing of life. But is this not some cruel mockery? may I indeed once more call you mine?"

He took her hand, as if even now doubting whether it would be really yielded to him, and endeavoured to read her meaning in the eyes that sparkled like twin balls of fire through the apertures in the mask. Their brightness indeed was hardly natural, and made a singular contrast with the icy hand that lay passively in his, neither returning its pressure nor yet making the least effort to get away from him. To get rid of the strange fancies that began to crowd upon him, he again asked, "May I not remove your mask?"

"Not till the bridal ceremony is over," was the reply. "You may again choose to reject me before the priest, and, if I must blush a second time for my disgrace, I would rather it should be under the shelter of a mask than expose myself to the gaze of the scoffers. Once more, then, is it your purpose to follow me to the altar?"

"It is," replied Julian, "aye, though Death himself, and not the priest, were watching there

to clutch me Whatever is your design — and this haste, this masking, full surely cloak some evil—to me it will be welcome.”

“I understand you now,” whispered Rachael to the Andalusian; “this is, indeed, revenge! yet it is not such as Jew or Jewess would have chosen. They drink not themselves of the poisoned cup they present to others.”

Maria replied only by an expressive look, commanding silence, and, hand in hand with Julian, led the way to the chapel-chamber, whither the Jewess followed unmasked, and, apparently, unobserved. On the opening of the doors, a blaze of light burst upon them, and, still farther to augment the bridegroom’s surprise, the room was filled with company, who had been brought there by the Castilian, while at the farther end stood the priest in his vestments by the side of a temporary altar. The King, all anxious for the termination of this singular scene, and recognizing Maria at once by the matchless elegance of her tiny form, advanced hastily to meet her.

“Our lovely hostess!—” he began, in his usual tone of gallantry. “Oddsfish, Señora, a mask may hide your face, but your step

and figure would betray you to the dullest sight in Christendom."

"It is not for me to dispute what you are pleased to advance, sire," replied the Andalusian, curtsying profoundly; "or I might be tempted to decline the compliment. Permit me to introduce to your Majesty—and to you, also, noble friends—my betrothed lord, while, at the same time, I invite you to our nuptials."

The surprise at this announcement was universal, such a catastrophe having formed no part of the various surmises that had been afloat for the last half hour. Congratulations then followed from all quarters, not the less loud and adulatory that they were in few instances sincere. But Charles himself rejoiced at the turn matters were taking, whatever might be the case with others. He had been somewhat alarmed before, when the Castilian talked of inviting them to a scene of vengeance, the threat being connected, in his mind, with some tragedy such as he well knew a Spaniard was capable of enacting at any risk, even with less provocation than had been given to the Andalusian. Greatly, therefore, was he

relieved when he found the lady's ideas of vengeance went no farther than to marrying the culprit.

"On the honour of a king," he said, "this is the prettiest and most lady-like revenge I ever heard of. I much fear, though, it is such as may tempt my lieges to become offenders, and if it should I can hardly blame them. But you forget your mask, Señora."

"Allow me to forget it a little longer," replied the Andalusian—"only till the ceremony is over."

"How! married in a mask!" replied the king; "if I did not know your voice and figure too surely for mistake, I should fancy that bit of silk hid some changeling. Oddsfish, Señora, I must needs give you away, were it only for the strangeness of the thing."

Again the Andalusian made a low reverence, in acknowledgment of this grace, when the ceremony commenced, and, greatly to the surprise, if not disappointment, of most present, was finished without interruption. While murmurs, more or less indicative of these feelings were yet going round, the Andalusian stepped

a few paces forward, and, drawing a paper from her bosom, craved a moment's audience of her company. At this request, curiosity reduced the most talkative to immediate silence, the king only muttering to himself his favourite ejaculation.

"Julian," she began, "the time is now come to requite wrong with wrong, scorn with scorn, and infamy with infamy. Did you—could you—imagine that a woman, and she, too, with the hot blood of a Spanish mother in her veins, would sit down in patient sufferance of such disgrace as you have put upon me?—Weak, as you are base and cruel, knew you not that the poor worm will turn when trodden on—that the faithful dog himself may be incensed to bite his master? In wedding me, you thought to marry wealth, and lands, and beauty; wretched man! how have you deceived yourself! my wealth and lands have passed by bond irrevocable to another; and for my beauty—Oh! kind and holy Virgin, strengthen me in this awful hour!—for my beauty, when I remove this silk, what is it you will see?—features, black as charred wood, and so hideous in their distortion that

henceforth none shall look upon them without loathing and abhorrence."

"Almighty Power!" groaned Julian, "'tis a poisoned mask!"

"You know it, then? you have seen, ere this, how such a poison works, and can guess the face your bride will show you?" exclaimed Maria, wrought beyond herself by that same delusive species of enthusiasm which makes the votary even of a false belief go as readily to the stake as to a bed of roses.

"What have you done, Maria?" cried Julian—"Oh what have you done! Better, a thousand times, you had fixed that detested mask upon myself, or plunged your Spanish knife into my heart. In dying I had blest you. But this—oh, this is too, too horrible!"

"Will you not remove the mask from my face?" retorted the Andalusian, her exaltation of spirits momentarily increasing; "will you not give me the bridal kiss?"

"Hush! hush!" said Julian, in a voice of deep anguish; "it is time, for both our sakes—for the sake of all present—to put an end to a scene so painful. Bid me not remove your mask—ask me not to terrify others by showing

what it has done, and what it still conceals ; but come to my arms—to my heart—and grow there till that heart shall perish.”

A violent fit of trembling seized the Andalusian at these words, the false feeling of excitement, that had hitherto buoyed her up, seeming, on the sudden, to abandon her.

“Say not so, Julian,” she murmured, in a broken voice ; “make me not, when too late, doubt the justice of my vengeance.”

“I have said it,” replied Julian, firmly. “So may Heaven help me as I prove a true and loving husband to the sad remainder of your existence.”

“Oh, Julian ! Julian !” sobbed the relenting bride ; “that you should be so fond, who have been so cruel !”

She flung herself, or rather dropped, upon his bosom, for her feelings overpowered her, and few even of that heartless throng but evinced sympathy with her distress. In the meanwhile Charles had picked up the scroll, which had dropped unconsciously from her hand, and, his eye having been caught by the first lines, curiosity prevailed over more ceremonious restraints, and induced him to read on. It ran thus—

"JULIAN,

"I write this, well knowing your revengeful spirit, and anxious that the last feeble tracings of my hand should save you from a great crime. You will be told that the Señora de los Dolores was the cause of my poor Alfred's death—on the word of a dying mother such reports are false; but were they otherwise, they concern you not, for know—"

The king had read thus far in an under tone, when his voice roused the attention of Maria, who, instantly starting up, snatched at the letter, and tore it into a thousand pieces, saying at the same time—

"I crave you pardon, sire; but that letter was as a loaded mine, and the powder in it so cunningly compounded that, had you gone farther, it had exploded and destroyed a noble building—Oh, that I could recal the past!"

And she wrung her hands in agony, while through the loop-holes of the mask her eyes were seen to overflow with tears.

"As far as gold and lands are concerned, it is recalled," said the Castilian, who had

hitherto been a grave and silent spectator of the scene. "I return the deeds, which I received only as you talked of a cloister. Would I might as easily undo the greater mischief!"

"Be that my task," said the Jewess, stepping forward. "I have deceived you, lady, deceived you to your own advantage. I guessed your purpose, picked the lock of the casket, and substituted a piece of innocent silk for the poisoned devil that you cherished. Remove your mask, and fear not that your face will bring ought but pleasure to the beholder."

At once Maria tore off the mask. She was standing, at the moment, opposite to a large mirror, and when it gave back her features in all their native loveliness, she uttered a shriek of joy, and would have fallen had not Julian caught her in his arms.

"Alfred was not your brother," whispered the Andalusian, as she lay sobbing on his bosom; "you were adopted by Lady Trevanion at a time when she despaired of a child to inherit her name and fortune."

"Oddsfish," said the good-humoured Charles, who had overheard her, "take care

what you say, or the King may learn your secret."

"It is safe, sire, in your custody, I am well assured," said Julian, dropping on his knees; "but I care not if all the world knows that I am not—"

"That you are not plain Captain Trevanion, any longer," said the king, interrupting him, and at the same time drawing his sword, and laying it lightly on his shoulder: "Arise, Sir Julian—but mind, I bind it on you both, by your allegiance—this is not

THE LAST BALL."

END OF VOL. I.

J. BENSLEY, PRINTER, WOKING.

THE LAST BALL;

AND

OTHER TALES,

BY GEORGE SOANE, ESQ., B.A,

AUTHOR OF "FROLICS OF PUCK," "INNKEEPER'S DAUGHTER," ETC.

"If thou be a severe, sour-complexioned man, then I here
disallow thee to be a competent judge."

ISAAC WALTON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
EDWARD CHURTON, 26, HOLLES STREET,

1843.

J. BENSLEY, PRINTER WOKING.

THE

HUEL-ROSE.

You have seen fairy land.—DECKER.

ABOUT eighty, or, it may be, a hundred years ago, lived that very celebrated personage, Ralph Hammerer, the youngest, the shortest, the ugliest, and the wisest, of four brothers, all tanners in a certain Cornish bal, or mine, which, in the language of the place and time, was called the *Huel-Rose*. His fame, however, might be said to be of a very domestic nature, and flourished in a narrow circle, being, as far as I know, confined to the aforesaid mine, and a neighbourhood of about ten or twelve miles, which neighbourhood included a small town, four villages, and divers cottages, with the usual

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quantum of gossips, male and female, dogs, pigs, poultry, and children. The three elder brothers, John, Richard, and Philip, were men of uncommon strength and stature, whose whole wit lay in their muscles; good-humoured withal, and in nothing else remarkable, except it was for their attachment to Ralph, to whom they were as bounden vassals, notwithstanding their disparity of age, he being a lad of fifteen, while the youngest of them was at least two and twenty. But it was not only with his brothers that Ralph was all-powerful; he had contrived to establish the same exclusive dominion over every one of his fellow miners, and from the age of twelve he might be considered as the autocrat of the mine,—a fact that was the more surprising, as it must be confessed that his bad qualities were in the proportion of two to one to his good; he was thievish as a magpie, greedy as a wolf, mischievous as a monkey, and uncertain as a weather-cock; while into the opposite scale could only be thrown an uncommon invention and an inexhaustible fund of humour, that, when he thought proper to exert them, were sure to amuse the dullest, and subdue

those who had both cause and disposition to be angry. By the help of these two staple qualities he was, indeed, the best of all possible companions, and in virtue of his boon companionship his faults were forgiven; and, though, with the exception of his brothers, no one could be exactly said to love him, still his authority was with all unquestionable. In nothing was this influence more shewn than in the transference of his own work from his own shoulders, though nature had seldom given shoulders better calculated for labour; for, if he had not grown much upwards, after the usual fashion of men, he had, to make amends, shot out prodigiously in a lateral direction, so as to form a square-built, strong-set figure, that seemed to belong to twenty rather than to a lad of fifteen. But the fact was, he did not choose to work, excepts by fits and starts, which fits were of rare occurrence, and, when they did occur, of short duration, never lasting so long as to endanger his health by any excess of labour.

A phrenologist, had any existed at the time, would probably have read his character, such

as I have described it, in the lumps and bumps of his head; a physiognomist certainly would have discovered much of it in his face, which, though neither very ugly nor very handsome, was in other respects not a little remarkable. It was exceedingly long, without being thin; the nose resembled a parrot's beak, and the eyes were small and of a bluish grey; but the most singular feature was the upper lip, which was large and flexible, always in strong action when he spoke, and giving a decided character of animal voluptuousness to the whole face. The forehead seemed as if it consisted of two stories, or as if Nature in a freak had piled one skull upon another, without much consideration of the fitness of the two parts to each other; and this prodigious building was thatched with a quantity of shining black hair that hung down stiff and straight without the slightest symptom of a curl.

General was the lamentation when one day this worthy character was found missing from the mine, and various were the conjectures set afloat as to the cause and nature of his absence. The eldest brother surmised that he had been

decoyed away by the eloquence of a recruiting serjeant, who had lately been beating up for heroes in the neighbouring village; the next opined that he had been spirited off by a band of gipsies, — no bad conjecture, considering the absentee's general propensities; but the youngest of the brothers rejected both these opinions, and stoutly argued for his having been cajoled into the clutches of the giant, Tregagle, in revenge of his many mockeries; for Ralph, though so young, was a mighty sceptic in the affairs of ghosts and goblins, and, if the vicar of St. Just might be credited, in more weighty matters also.

For the two first years the partizans of these various opinions severally maintained that the subject of them had become a captain of dragoons, a king of gipsies, and a favourite of the giant; for such was their idea of his superior genius that, however they might differ in other respects, they were all agreed in one point, namely, that he must succeed, let his purpose be what it would. In the third year their belief in his infallibility waxed colder and colder. In the fourth they concluded him dead, and each

in a manner corresponding with his previous faith, the first brother imagining that he had been shot as a soldier ; the second, that he had been hung as a gipsy ; and the third, that he had met his fate from the hands of Tregagle, for which last opinion the adopter of it had this very convincing reason,—he had heard the voice of Ralph *hailing his own name* from the sea one clear moonlight night. Drowned, therefore, he must be, unless they would deny the belief established in Cornwall for time immemorial, though the manner of his drowning was yet a point for question. Upon this head they could still dispute, and consequently they did dispute for six whole months, when, the subject being tolerably well worn out, they dropt it altogether, and from that time forward the name of Ralph was scarcely mentioned. But, just as others had ceased to talk of him, Ralph appeared, to talk of himself, not having been shot, hung, or drowned, and furthermore, giving the lie to all his prophets by his return in a character totally opposite to that of a dragoon, an Egyptian, or the favourite of any one, man or giant.

It was a rough evening, about six years from the time of Ralph's absence, when the three brothers, in company with two other workmen, descended to their labour in the Huel Rose. As the hours of toil had been doubled upon them from a late increase of the ore, they, as usual in such cases, commenced their operations by *sleeping out a candle*, that is by lighting a candle and sleeping till it was burnt out, after which they worked briskly for two or three hours, and then *took a touch-pipe*, or, in the language of men of the upper earth, rested half an hour and smoked, while their employers believed, or were supposed to believe, that they were killing themselves with exertion. On the present occasion, their leisure was agreeably interspersed with eating, drinking, and a violent exercise of the lungs under the somewhat inappropriate name of singing; but, loud as their clamour might be, there was above their heads a yet more horrible uproar.

The Huel Rose, no very uncommon case with mines in Cornwall, extended its length full eighty fathoms under the sea, which in times of storm would shake the arches of the lode, till

the whole seemed ready to fall together in one mighty ruin ; and even now the dashing of the waves, driven along by a wild summer gale, and the rolling of sands and rocks under the same influence, kept up a hurly-burly, that, to unpractised ears, must have been truly astounding. It was, however, no drawback on their merriment, or, if any thing, they ate and drank with increased vigour, roaring out, with more energy than harmony, choice catches and fragments of catches, of which the following, from its frequent repetition, seems to have been the choicest,—

Cannikin, clink,
 Drink boys, drink ;
 Under the sun
 There's no such fun
 As to sit by the cask and see the tap run,
 With a brown loaf and a rasher well done !
 Hale-au-lo,
 Jolly rumble o'.

In the midst of this delectable glee, the taste of which, resting, as it does, upon brown bread and bacon, cannot be disputed, whatever may be said of the poetry, the glimmer of a lantern in the adit became visible to the wondering

eyes of Philip. Immediately, breaking off his song, he caught up a pick-axe, and put himself in the attitude of a man desperately bent on labour.

“What is the matter with the fool now?” exclaimed the eldest of the brothers.

Philip made no answer, but turned his axe, after the fashion of a sign-post, in the direction of the light, which was growing more and more distinct upon the walls of the adit, though as yet the bearer was invisible.

“It must be the captain, or the purser,” whispered Richard.

“It may be the devil, may it not?” replied John, with infinite scorn; “what should bring the purser or the captain here at this hour?—fill up my horn—it’s only some flat of a Londoner come to gape at our shovels and pick-axes; the purser and captain know what’s what a deal better.”

It should be observed, by the way, that by these names the tanners designate the book-keeper and the overseer of the mine, who have it in charge to see that the workmen do their duty, but who, as on the present occasion, often

find it more agreeable to attend to their own particular amusements.

"Then, the devil it is, or else brother Ralph!" cried Richard.

. As Richard spoke, a man appeared on the top round of the last ladder, where he rested, with his back to the steps, holding out a large ship-lantern, and looking at the astonished group with a singular expression of face, in which fun and malice were mixed up in tolerably equal proportions. He wore the trowsers and jacket of a sailor, a low-crowned, broad-brimmed hat, and had a blue handkerchief loosely tied, or rather twisted, about his neck, that, like his face, was tanned by the mingled action of sun and wind to the complexion of a brick-bat.

"Now, are not you a set of lazy lubbers?" exclaimed the strange visitant upon the ladder. "But keep a sharp look-out, my fine fellows, or the captain will be upon you, and then there will be the devil to pay, and no pitch hot."

"Ralph! Ralph!" cried the brothers with one voice, when the sailor dashed down his lantern, and, giving a hearty cheer, bounded off

the ladder and was amongst them with a single spring.

“And how is it with you, lads?” said Ralph, as he returned their greetings. “But first a taste of your tankard;—brave liquor, by gosh! and yet it’s nothing like the stinging stuff on the other side of the water.”

“Then you have not been shot, after all?” cried the first brother.

“Nor hung?” cried the second.

“Nor drowned?” cried the third.

“All three, lads, all three. I was first drowned in the Dutchman’s herring-pond, and be d——d to it; then hung up by the feet till the water poured out of my mouth faster than you ever pumped it out of your dirty mine here; and lastly, I was shot in the arm in beating off the revenue sharks—b——t them! So there’s being drowned, hung, and shot for you, and yet I am alive and hearty, and can dip my beak as deep into a pint-pot as the best of you.”

“And where have you been all this time? we thought the recruiting serjeant had crimped you.”

"Or that the gipsies had picked you up."

"Or that Tregagle had clutched you, as I long prophesied he would, to pay you for your abuse of him. You know you were always a sad dog, Ralph."

"Soldiers and gipsies?" exclaimed Ralph; "thieves and pedlars both of them! As to old Tregagle——"

"Hush, hush!" said Richard hastily, and as if afraid of his own voice; "or, if you must speak a little blasphemy, speak it in a whisper; he may hear you else."

"With all my heart and soul," replied the sailor, with a shout that might have been heard in the teeth of a North-wester, and which certainly must have reached the giant's ears, supposing him to have any.

"Don't talk so wickedly," cried the orthodox Philip.

"Or at least not so loudly," added Richard.

"I won't have it!" exclaimed Philip; "by Saint Nicholas, and Saint John to boot, I won't have it, Ralph. Laugh, if you like it, as you used to do, at the old vicar, and it does not so

much signify,—but to make game of Tregagle !—why, it is downright piety and prostitution. I have seen him myself, as plain as I see the nose on your face.”

“And that’s a thumper, like one of his own stories,” exclaimed the eldest brother, his love of a joke, and the recollection of Ralph’s juvenile character, getting for a moment the better of his terror.

“I tell thee I have seen him myself,” asseverated Philip, with an ominous frown at the jester.

“Tell that to the marines, Phil,” said the seaman ; “the sailors won’t believe you.”

“Sailor or marine, you must believe it,” replied Philip ; “you shall believe it,—or it will be the worse for us all. Have you forgotten that we are sitting by the giant’s shaft ?”

Philip pointed, as he spoke, to a shaft on the right of them, which was almost closed up by the falling in of the walls, the immense timbers and lode-arches being jammed together by the violence of the lateral pressure. In this state it had remained for more than fifty years ; for, at the time when the accident happened, the

vein of ore was almost exhausted, in addition to which a prodigious flux of water, called, in the technical language of the miners, *bottom-water*, had rendered the working of it very little profitable, and, therefore, it had been abandoned altogether. From this period, according to the miners, a certain giant, by name Tregagle, had taken up his abode in the deserted shaft; indeed they went farther; they roundly attributed the falling in of the walls to his agency, and that too from an avaricious desire of keeping to himself a vein of gold, which must have been discovered by the tanners, had he not maliciously interfered with their operations, and fairly blocked them out by tumbling down the rocks and jamming up the mouth of the shaft.

In justice, however, to the accused giant, it should be recorded that he had left a small opening, enough for any man, under the size of an alderman, to creep through, had he been so disposed. But even this gallantry on the giant's part, in thus leaving an opening for every enemy who might choose to do battle with him for the mastery of the shaft, failed to gain him favour with any except a certain

Dr. Kirton, the free-thinking apothecary of St. Just, who generously stood forward in his behalf, and endeavoured to stem the torrent. Being held in much admiration by the miners, the Doctor might have succeeded, had it not been for the general bad character of his client—a character that had been established for centuries, in virtue of which nine-tenths of the mischief that happened in the parish were invariably supposed to originate in his malice. If a ship was wrecked, it was Tregagle who had raised the storm; if a house was burnt, it was Tregagle who had been the incendiary; if a cow died, it was still by the giant's agency; in short, he was the author of all unowned mischief, and there was never any want of witnesses to swear the fact home to him by the undeniable evidence of their own eyes and ears.

The Doctor in vain opposed an opinion founded on such irrefragable proofs of the giant's previous enormities; and, notwithstanding his talk of attractions and affinities, he did not make a single convert, though, as his language was singularly learned and obscure, it might in all

reason be expected to persuade his auditors, the unintelligible being particularly celebrated for its powers of conviction. On this occasion it totally failed, and when he attempted to put forth a new solution of the matter, by the influence of water gushing through the crevices in the rainy season, and thereby rotting the lode that had been left in pillars to support the mine, his doctrine was universally scouted as the dream of an infidel, who had neither common religion nor common honesty.

Such being the case, it may be easily supposed with what horror the three brothers, born and bred in the orthodox faith of the Huel-Rose, listened to the abominable heresies of the sailor, who was not only proof against all arguments, but whose infidelity actually increased the more it was opposed.

"I wonder," said the eldest, at length, after having in vain put his argument in all manner of shapes,— "I wonder who made you so much wiser than your neighbours."

"How the devil should I know?" replied the sailor; "but as to your giant, when I see him I'll believe in him, and not till then."

"Why then," retorted the second, "if you believe in no more than you see, mayhap you don't believe you ever had a father, for the old man died by a good month before you were born."

"Lillibullero!" exclaimed Ralph.

"It's my belief," said the third, with drunken gravity,— "it's my belief, brother Ralph, that you'll go to hell some day."

"Maybe ay, maybe no," replied Ralph indifferently; "howsomever, many a brave fellow has been wrecked in them hot latitudes before me, and many a sneaker will come after me, though the parson is at his helm, and old Snufflebags, the clerk, sounds his way with the psalm-book."

"I don't care for old Snufflebags or his master," said Philip.

"Nor I either," interrupted Ralph; "he's but a rum pilot, I suspect, after all; and the other keeps but a queerish sort of look-out, though he is always bawling, 'shoal water—breakers a-head,' enough to bother the best seaman that ever stood at the wheel."

"I don't care for Snufflebags or his master!"

reiterated Philip at the utmost pitch of his voice.

"I hear you," said the sailor.

"But as to Tregagle, that's another matter," continued Philip.

"Very much so," replied Ralph; "all the same as between a king's ship and a privateer; the one cruises under royal colours, and the other stands on his own bottom, which, in the giant's case, I take it, is a pretty broad one."

"I tell you what, Ralph, you may laugh and snigger as long as you please, but I may believe my own eyes and ears, I suppose, and I'll take my corporal oath on it, he lives in yonder shaft."

"And what, by the knocking Nicholas, should he be doing there? When I was a youngster, you used to palm upon me that the Old-One had set him to work in emptying Dosmary pool with a limpet shell, with a hole in the bottom of it, and, if so, I should not think he was like to trouble you for one while; he must have a tight job of it on his hands."

"That's true too."

"Why then hurrah, my lads, for old Tre-

gagle, and here's wishing him a better master, and no easterly winds!"

To understand this allusion it should be known that, when the wind is easterly, the devil amuses himself with chasing Tregagle three times round Dosmary pool. After the third chevy, the wily giant makes off with all speed to Roche Rock, and thrusts his huge head into the chapel window, much as the ostrich is said to bury his neck in the first object soft enough to receive it; but with this essential difference in the result,—the latter is still caught by his huntsman, while, with the giant, the safety of his head guarantees the safety of his whole body, and Beelzebub has nothing left for it but to whistle off his pack and return bootless from the chase. This allusion, however, was not taken kindly by Philip, who exclaimed, with high indignation, "If you had your due, you would be hunted round Dosmary pool yourself!"

"Ay, ay, Phil, and rare sport I should shew the Old-One, instead of sneaking off and hiding my jolterhead in a church window, as your

giant does, unless the story belies him wickedly."

"The wickedness is all your own!" roared Philip, whose orthodoxy was growing every moment more intense from the opposition it met with.

"Yes, indeed, Ralph," said John, in a manner that was meant to be particularly insinuating, "you are a terrible blasphemer; and, if you won't believe Phil, take it on my word, for I have heard him and the *knockers* at work scores of times."

"I hear them now!" exclaimed Philip, starting up, "I hear them now!" And certainly a low muffled sound was audible, that, with no great stretch of fancy, might be imagined to proceed from several hammers at work in a distant part of the mine. A momentary flush passed over the sailor's swarthy brow, not unobserved by his brothers, the eldest of whom did not fail to triumph in this convincing argument for their belief, while Richard, who had by this time become maudlin drunk, compared him to the Prodigal Son, and shed tears of joy

over his miraculous conversion, protesting that it gladdened the very cockles of his heart, even beyond the discovery of a new lode.

Philip, not quite so tender or not quite so intoxicated, went over the old chapter of damnation, and insisted, while he regretted, that there was not the slightest hope for Ralph, whose ultimate fate was fixed beyond any possibility of change, a sentence that was received by the sailor with marvellous insensibility. To shew his utter indifference to both his monitors, the monitor lachrymose, no less than the monitor damnatory, he discharged a pistol through the opening of the ominous shaft, thereby effectually reducing them to silence from the very excess of horror growing out of such an atrocity.

They listened perfectly aghast to the multiplied echoes of the pistol, as the sound was reverberated from the various cavities, and which, coming from all directions, might have deceived any one into the belief that the shot had not remained unanswered. Several pieces of rotten ore flew from the walls and arches, as if splintered off by so many balls; one large fragment fell at Ralph's feet, who immediately fancied

himself assailed, and, his natural powers of perception being not a little clouded by the quantity of spirits imbibed in the last half hour, he without another word began to force his way into the giant's shaft for the purpose of chastising his hidden enemy, even though it should be Tregagle himself in person. Such an act of temerity was perfectly astounding—and it did astound the brothers; indeed it was impossible for any people to be more astounded, and, before they could recover from the utter stupefaction occasioned by this new enormity, he had disappeared in the darkness, not having even taken the precaution of a light, and in a few minutes the sound of his steps had ceased to be heard. The hearts of the brothers sank within them; for, while they were quite certain of Ralph's fate, they had some misgivings as to the probable consequence to themselves, it being extremely doubtful how Tregagle might choose to take this irruption into a ground that he seemed to have especially appropriated to himself, from the violent way in which he had dispossessed the old proprietors.

If he were so pleased, there was no apparent

reason why he should not overwhelm this shaft, as he had formerly overwhelmed the other, by main strength; or he might, with less trouble to himself, call in the help of the sea that rolled so stormily above them and destroy the whole mine at once. In fact, there seemed to be some ground for this latter supposition; the din of waters above their head was truly appalling, and the uproar increased every minute with the increasing violence of the tempest. There were other symptoms of its fury not quite so noisy but infinitely more terrible; the timbers groaned under the rolling weight of rocks and waters, and the arches were visibly shaken, giving sufficient proof that the storm above, from whatever cause it arose, was one of unusual violence. If, indeed, the giant had any hand in raising it, as the brothers were disposed to believe, he had good reason to plume himself upon his vigour.

It might naturally be supposed that fear, stronger than all other feelings, would have made the tanners seek for safety by flying from the mine; and, had their stay depended solely upon their fraternal affection, it is most proba-

ble that they would have done so. But fear works strangely with men ; and, if it sometimes drive them to fly from the face of danger, at others it acts with the real or supposed fascination of the rattle-snake, fixing them, as if by a spell, to the very object of their horror. So it was with our brothers ; they waited with a sort of stupid dread for the blow that was to crush them, and wondering that it was yet to come, when they were joined by the other miners, who had been working in a distant shaft, and who now sought them with that instinctive feeling which makes even the sea-birds flock together before a tempest, as if there were safety in society. This addition to their numbers loosened all tongues at once ; the return of Ralph, his metamorphosis into a seaman, his adventuring into the shaft, were marvels rapidly communicated, and, heightened as they were by the circumstances of time and place, amidst roaring waters and rocking columns, were received with breathless admiration. It would be hard to say which was the predominant feeling with them—wonder at Ralph's courage, curiosity as to the result, even while they deemed it

certain, or fear for their own safety ; but, as they swallowed cup after cup of coarse and ardent spirits, the two first passions gradually gained the ascendant, and the joy in Ralph suspended all other considerations.

While they were yet debating what was to be done, or whether any thing could be done in his behalf, a sharp sound was heard from the ominous shaft, like the shriek of some one struck by sudden and mortal agony, but a cry so protracted as almost to surpass the limits of human utterance. The first feeling of all who heard it was unmingled terror ; the second was of a more generous nature, and one of which they would certainly have been incapable had they been less thoroughly intoxicated. With one voice, they resolved to rescue the sailor from his peril, or at least share it with him ; and John, as the eldest, if not the boldest, agreed to be the first to essay the adventure. Hastily seizing a torch, he clambered up into the fatal passage, and, hurrying onward, his light soon ceased to be visible, though for some time those below could hear the falling of stones and rubbish as he forced his way ; but

in a few minutes even this had ceased, and all again was as dark and silent in the giant's shaft as if it had been the tomb of those who entered it.

Minute after minute thus rolled on, and still he did not return, till, as they guessed from the wasting of the candle, an hour must have elapsed, when a second wail burst upon their ears similar to the first ; but, if any thing, still more acute and lengthened. It might have been expected to sober the two remaining brothers ; but, so far from it, while it palsied every faculty in the other miners, with them it only seemed to aggravate the effect of their drunkenness. Richard became more tender and pathetic, while Philip lavished his anathemas upon all unbelievers, past, present, and to come, with uncontrollable wrath, a want of Christian charity that exceedingly scandalized the melting mood of his brother.

"Poor Ralph !" cried the weeping Richard—"poor lost soul ! if it were not for your loving brother—hiccup—what would become of you ? the giant would have you living, and—hiccup—the devil would have you dead, and

'tis hard saying which is the worst. But hand me over my pick-axe, and—that's right, lads—and now, by the blessing of Saint Keveene, and his help to boot,—for he can't grudge lending a hand against his old enemy,—I'll bring back Ralph safe and sound, or at least his poor body, that he may have Christian burial."

"You are not going to carry off our last candle!" exclaimed, with one voice, all the miners, on whom the prospect of being left in utter darkness worked most disagreeably.

But to all expostulation on this point the magnanimous Richard turned a deaf ear, and, having gained the entrance of the shaft, he disappeared as his brother had done, while those below sent after him mingled threats and entreaties for the recovery of the light. This contumacy so highly irritated Philip, who was equally exalted with himself above all vulgar considerations, that he resolved to follow the offender, and inflict upon him such summary justice as would anticipate and render useless the interference of the invisible world.

After some time, and at the expense of

sundry falls and bruises, he at last found the entrance to the shaft ; still all was dark, till, on coming to where the passage took a sudden turn, he caught a glimpse of what he supposed must be Richard's light, faintly reflected on the wall. "Now, then," he thought, "I shall have you ;"—but at this very instant the same ominous wail swept through the shaft a third time, the light vanished, and all was again dark and silent. For a moment the heart of Philip quailed—he paused—then turned his back for flight—but the devil of brandy at last proved too strong for the devil of fear, and he resumed his onward course, though with all the caution of a general who knows and fears his enemy.

As he advanced, to his great surprise, a light again glimmered towards him, not upon the walls, but upon the floor, through a small cavity, the upper part of the passage being closed by the same convulsion that had shut up the mouth of the shaft. Through this opening, he contrived to squeeze with no little difficulty, when he found himself in what he supposed to have been originally a *plat* or *plot*,

that is, a place distinct from the shaft, intended for the convenience of lodging ore till it can be carried off; for in such mines it sometimes happens that the metal is dug faster than it can be taken away. At the farther end was a small pool of water, as warm as new milk to the touch, a circumstance which is generally supposed to precede an enlargement of the lode, and which often occurs when the water in another part of the same mine is perfectly cold. On the ground was burning Richard's candle—but where was Richard himself?—there was no farther outlet visible. Had he been drowned, either by accident, or the malice of Tregagle? and were the wailings heard in the mine the wailings of himself and of his brothers, as they were severally dragged below the water? Philip gazed with a dull vacant stare upon the pool, as if he expected to read an answer in it, till his brain was giddy, and he felt an almost irresistible desire to plump into it; a species of fascination that sounder men than himself have experienced, when gazing too long and earnestly upon a clear sea, and more particularly when the sun was on it,

seeming to shoot his rays to the very sand.

While he yet continued this listless stare, his attention was suddenly roused by the appearance of something that seemed to be moving in the pond, though whether of itself, or from the action of the water, was uncertain, nor, from the depth and darkness, could its outlines be distinguished. He instantly caught up the candle to examine it more closely; but the light, instead of shewing a living object, flashed upon a golden cup, large and bright, that hung upon a point of rock, a few feet below the surface. It may be doubted whether the sight of his brothers would, for the moment, have given him so much pleasure. With a shout of joy, he flung himself on his knees, and, stooping down to the water, he pounced upon the goblet in an instant. Unfortunately, in his extreme eagerness to possess the prey, he tumbled into the water, and, once below the surface, he was held there by the weight of the cup, which continued to drag him downwards, in spite of all his exertions. Tired by the struggle, and gasping for breath, he would now

have willingly relaxed his hold ; but the metal seemed to be glued to his hands and his fingers, that were convulsively clutched about it, with a force that defied every effort to undo their grasp. He continued to sink deeper and deeper, the pool seeming fathomless, and his powers of breathing still holding out in a most miraculous manner, while all sorts of fantastic shapes gathered around him, amongst which the giant Tregagle was the most conspicuous, shouting, chattering, splashing his huge arms and feet about, and singing in a tone of mock admonition,—

Hold the cup fast, 'tis heavy gold ;
Brighter was never bought or sold ;
Hold the cup fast, for many a slip
Happens between the cup and lip ;
What, though it cost you dear at last,
Hold the cup fast, hold the cup fast !

And herewith the giant laughed furiously, all the strange monsters about him joining, like true courtiers, in their master's mirth, and seeming to enjoy the joke beyond measure. One little imp, the most fantastic of the crew, was particularly boisterous, skipping about with

restless activity, now perching himself like a lump of lead upon Philip's breast, and forcing open his eyes, and then again flinging his arms about the poor fellow's throat, and squeezing him till he was almost suffocated, or whooping and hollowing in his ears with the noise of a thousand bells.

Amidst all this uproar, and while he was still sinking, and apparently as far from the bottom of the pool as ever, he heard the voice of Ralph crying out, "Let go the iron, fool; let go the iron, or it will sink you."

"It is gold!—pure gold," replied the drowning man—"bright massive gold! and I can't undo my hand."

Hereupon Ralph, and the giant, and the little imp, all began laughing anew as if for a wager, when the former struck him a heavy blow on the hand, at which his fingers immediately relaxed their grasp, and the cup sank to the bottom of the water, hissing like hot iron, and throwing up a thousand brilliant sparks like so many little stars, which again split, each into as many parts, till the pool became a flood of fire. The condition of the sufferer was, however, little

mended by this change of appearance, for the giant and his fantastic crew now fell upon him might and main, and, taking him for their football, never left off kicking at him, till by one unlucky blow he was kicked out of the water into the mine again. At this feat the mirth of the goblin rout redoubled, and the game too was being resumed on dry land with even more vigour than it had been carried on before in the water, when most unexpectedly Dr. Kirton appeared in his formidable cocked-hat, and, flourishing his gold-headed cane, which had long been predominant over the children of St. Just, when indulging in unlawful sports, and which now as easily put an end to the vagaries of poor Philip's tormentors. The doctor, equally famous for surgery and scepticism, has been already mentioned as a sort of doubtful friend to Tregagle, exculpating him, indeed, from the charges brought against him by popular tradition, but at the same time almost denying his existence. At the sight of this ambiguous ally, either from fear or friendship the elfin party slunk away, leaving behind them the golden cup, which, as it seemed, the diabolotin had

fetches from the bottom of the pool expressly for the purpose, and the victim of their malicious sport fell into a swoon, the last thing he had a glimpse of being the near corner of the doctor's trilateral hat.

The swoon lasted long. At length the tide of life, which had ebbed to its lowest mark, began again to flow, when the very same object, that had been the farewell land-mark to his departing senses, was now the first to greet them on their return. As he gradually came to himself, first one corner of the hat became visible, then a second, then a third, then the whole hat in all its trilateral dignity, till, as his powers of perception cleared up, his eyes took in the complete doctor, including the gold-headed cane, which had been so potent over the goblins. But this was all that remained of the former scene; for, instead of being in the giant's shaft, he was lying on his own bed in his own hovel. Still he was wholly at a loss to reconcile the witchery of the past with the present reality, and he gazed on the hat and its wearer with looks that seemed to ask for an explanation of his doubts.

"Humph!" said the doctor, as if in answer to the wild gaze of his patient—"Not quite recovered our senses yet?—all in good time—not well to hurry nature."

The patient was still more bewildered by these muttered ejaculations, of which he readily caught the import, though without being at all forwarded in his knowledge of the real state of things. With some difficulty, he found words to address his visitor.

"This is very kind and neighbourly, Master Doctor, and I am heartily glad to see you—but I don't exactly know—that is, I can't guess—"

"I dare say you can't; you'll soon come to, though; yes, yes; the pulse beats pretty freely now."

"How came I here, doctor? I thought, to be sure, I was in the *bal*."

"And so you might have been still, if you had not thrust your dunderhead into a shaft where you had no business, and tumbled into the water for your pains. Lucky I happened to visit the mine, as I did, to see old Borlase;

the chicken-hearted rogues would never have gone near you else ; but the moment they told me of your pranks, I guessed there was mischief brewing, and egad I came just in time ; you had swallowed more water in one quarter of an hour than in your whole life before. The dose had well-nigh proved too much for you. If you must drink the pure element,—which, however, I don't advise,—take it in smaller quantities ; you may not always find me at hand to set you on your legs again."

"Take my word for it, doctor, I'll never trust a finger of my body in the giant's shaft again. But it was partly your fault, you know."

"Deuce take me then, if I know any such thing. But explain ; explain ; I shall be happy to learn of your wisdom."

"Nay, doctor, not so wise either."

"Well, never mind that ; explain ; I am curious to know what I had to do with your drowning yourself."

"Why you always laughed when folks talked of Tregagle——"

"To be sure I did ; but what of that ? you

did not surely plump your stupid head into the water to look for the giant?—though I could almost suspect you of as wise a trick.”

“Why, no, sir, I can’t say that I did; only as you laughed at the stories about him, and being so wise a gentleman, I partly thought you might be right after all; and so, when brother Ralph and the others did not come back, I took heart——”

“You should have taken brains at the same time, and then you would not have tumbled into the water like an ass, to be pulled out again like a rat, half-drowned.”

“That was all along of the gold cup; there it lay within a few feet of me, as if I had only to put out my hand to be a made man.”

“Gold cup! what gold cup? I saw nothing but an old iron kettle, that you clutched as firmly as if your life had depended upon it. There it is, and large enough to boil potatoes for the whole parish.”

“I know nothing about kettles, old or new; but there, as I said, was the gold cup quite close to me, to be had, as it were, for asking for. I did have it too—but, mercy on me! it

dragged me down as though it had been a whole ton of lead, and I kept sinking, sinking, sinking, while Tregagle and a score or two of his imps laughed, and shouted, and kicked me from one to the other, as though I had been a foot-ball, till you came and put them all to the rout with your gold-headed cane."

"The devil I did!"

"You know you did, Master Doctor."

"It's the first time I ever heard of it, notwithstanding."

"And if it had not been for you, it's my belief that I should never have got out of their clutches—the imps of the Old-One!"

"So I routed them all with my gold-headed cane, did I?—poor fellow! poor fellow!—the water has clean washed away his brains; he'll never be his own man again."

This unlucky prognostic, which seemed as if the doctor meant to deny his part in the late scenes, utterly confounded his patient; he was at a loss to comprehend how so learned a man could be so wilful, or what motive he could have in forswearing an act of kindness, which redounded so much to his credit,—for even the

vicar, armed with all the powers of the church, could not have shewn himself more ready to encounter, or more potent to discomfit, the giant and his auxiliaries.

“Why, surely, surely, Master Doctor,” said the perplexed patient, “you won’t go to deny what you did only half an hour ago?”

“And what was it I did half an hour ago?”

There was a peculiar glance in the doctor’s eye, as he put this question, that added still more to poor Philip’s embarrassment; it reminded him in a most unaccountable manner of the mischievous diabolotin, who had cut so principal a figure amongst his tormentors, and he began to suspect the doctor of a more intimate connexion with the fiends than he was willing the world should believe, if indeed he was not actually the little imp himself in the disguise of a human form. It was, therefore, with heavy misgivings, and a most deprecating tone, that he related the story of his adventures, just as I have repeated it from his narration, or rather from the traditionary tale of his narration, as it even now exists amongst the miners.

The doctor listened to the story with divers shrugs and contortions, that might have been the effect of impatience, but which, in Philip's mind, were identified with the malicious grimaces of the little imp when kicking him to and fro in the water. Scarcely would he wait for the conclusion, but exclaimed angrily, "Pooh, pooh, man : you fancied all this stuff while you were drowning, as men in such cases will often seem to go through, in a single minute, more than they can afterwards tell in an hour ; or you have dreamt it since, and now you have once got it into your silly noddle, nothing but the whip and the dark cellar will be able to drive it out again."

"Then I have not seen brother Ralph?" said Philip, inquiringly ; "and I did not follow him into the giant's shaft?"

"Both one and the other," replied the doctor, "or you had not been in this pretty pickle."

"And what has become of him?—and of John?—and of Richard?"

"Gone to feed the fish at the bottom of the pool, if there happen to be any in it,—at least I

can suppose no other. It seems, as I hear from the men of the Huel-Rose, you all went, one by one, into the giant's shaft,—by the by, you were as drunk as so many owls,—and, as there is no outlet, they must either have been drowned, or have returned by the way they entered, and this they did not do.—Bless me, nine o'clock!—Here, Martha, Martha—where the plague is the woman?—always out of the way when you are wanted, and in the way when nobody asks for you. Look well to your husband, woman, if you don't want to be a widow in a hurry. The pill at ten—again at twelve—and the draught in the morning;—and mind, when I say morning, I don't mean any of your sluts' mornings—none of your days that begin when other people are thinking of their dinner;—I mean five o'clock—do you hear?—five o'clock at the latest.”

“Yes, sir,” replied the admiring Martha, with a curtesy in proportion to her awe of the doctor.

“Good—but that's not all; fasten the windows—bolt the doors,—you understand?”

But Martha did by no means understand, and, what she did not dare to say, her looks said for her. The poor woman looked the very picture of wondering ignorance.

“Confound the fool!” exclaimed the impatient doctor. “His head’s not quite right yet—do you understand now?”

“Mercy on me!” cried Martha, lifting up her hands with mingled horror and astonishment, “you don’t say so?”

“Yes, I do; so look to the doors and windows — there’s no knowing what may happen.”

The last directions were uttered in a low tone, with certain mysterious winks and nods to give them the greater emphasis, and the dispenser of death and physic hurried off. The poor woman would have followed, as well from her profound respect towards him, as for the clearing up of certain doubts touching her probable widowhood; but the doctor, who though a skilful and humane man, was a perfect oddity, and had a peculiar aversion either to receiving or shewing civility, repulsed her

with, "No, no; stay where you are, woman—want none of your gossip—had enough of your husband's."

"But, sir! sir!—Doctor Kirton!" exclaimed Martha, raising her voice as the doctor retreated, "I beg your pardon, but shall we see you to-morrow?"

"What for?—he'll not die, I dare say; and, if he should, I'm not the undertaker."

When the doctor said this, he felt certain that his patient would not stand in need of a coffin for any thing that had happened, or was like to happen to him from his recent immersion in the pool of the giant's shaft; and herein he was perfectly right;—but he thought that, with the morning, Philip would forget his night-wonders, or at least accept a rational solution of them, and herein he was wrong. The miner, though fully himself again, yet persisted in his tale, which was soon circulated through Saint Just and the neighbourhood, and universally received without the smallest doubt of all having happened precisely as he had stated it. Some even joined in his suspicion of the doctor, and, as

they were constantly on the look-out for corroborative evidence, enough was easily found to identify him with the imp, though it was difficult to say why such a malicious being, with his violent propensity to buffeting and drowning people, should on the other hand practise the healing art for the benefit of humanity. It could only be accounted for on the supposition that the cutting off of limbs, and the administering of nauseous doses, occasioned him so sovereign a delight that he was willing to buy it at the price of a few cures, without the occasional display of which he would have found no employment for his malice. It was observed, too, by the most sagacious, that the cures were very few in number, while the modes of torture were exceedingly diversified, as might be learnt from the testimony of those who had ever had occasion to become acquainted with a certain oblong mahogany case, containing a multitude of sharp, shining instruments, for which the sufferers could find no name.

The story altogether attracted so much attention that, when the pool had been in vain

dragged for the bodies, the owner of the mine, as much to satisfy his own curiosity as to meet the general wish of the neighbourhood, determined to have the water drawn off entirely. This was a matter of little difficulty, the pond being scarcely eight feet deep; but, when it was accomplished, nothing else was learnt from their labour than that the cavity was an old underlying shaft filled by the waters which, in the course of wet seasons, are copiously supplied in all deeply sunk mines. The only singularity was its extending into a second chamber, on a level with the giant's shaft, and divided from the latter by a wall, which, as it went nearly half a foot below the water, had rendered its very existence unsuspected.

Nothing was more probable than that Ralph and his brothers, in their drunkenness, stumbling into the pool, had, without seeking it, found their way to the second chamber; but this conjecture, if true, did not render the question less perplexing—what had afterwards become of them? Even the doctor, with all his wish to find a rational solution

for the marvellous, was completely at fault here; not that he was the less obstinate in maintaining, as usual, that every thing had happened simply and naturally, though he allowed that the manner of it was, for the present, unintelligible. His declarations to this effect, however, were in general received ill, and by none more so than Philip and his partizans, who now contrived to unite two opinions that to most people would have seemed somewhat incompatible with each other. On the one hand they condemned the incredulous doctor for a goblin, while on the other they damned him as a mere mortal for his disbelief in goblins, hinting, at the same time, pretty plainly, that it would be as well to try his real nature by the help of a tar barrel.

It was on the second day after the disappearance of the brothers that this fruitless search for their bodies took place; and it was late on the evening of the same day, upon his return home from the mine, that Philip was destined to receive a farther proof of the interference of supernatural powers with the affairs of men. On seating himself by his

own hearth, weary enough with the toils of the last eight hours, his attention was caught by the appearance of a small leathern bag, carefully thrown aside into a corner, and which certainly did not enter into the very brief catalogue of his household goods. But what was his surprise, when, on lifting the bag and opening it, he found it full of gold coins of an ancient date, the most recent being of Cromwell's time, and many of a much earlier period; the whole, to guess by the weight, might amount in value to a hundred pounds, or perhaps even more; for the bag, though small, was heavy.

The first feeling that occurred to him was, unquestionably, pure delight at finding such a prize, with a determination of appropriating it to his own use; the next, and following hard upon it, was of a more doubtful nature, —might not the money be a fiendish gift, of course with no good purpose, and one which could not be kept with safety to himself either here or hereafter? To part with it was to lose that which he very much coveted to keep; and yet to retain it was to undergo a peril

for which he had a marvellous disinclination.

After a long struggle, prudence, or, to speak it more truly, fear got the mastery over avarice; he resolved to fling the gold into the sea, the best depository, he thought, for unhallowed treasure; and, besides, there was a chance of the tide casting it up again, a chance he devoutly prayed for, as, in that case, he determined to consider it a gift from Heaven, and take it to himself accordingly. This idea had something in it extremely consoling, if, indeed, it was not the only thing that at all reconciled him to the desperate measure of flinging away more wealth in a minute than he could gain in a life of labour, though that life should be extended to the age of Methusaleh.

The night was pitch dark, when, with a heavy heart, he set out upon this purpose, equally reluctant to peril his soul or to part with the gold. Something, indeed, seemed to whisper him that, if he did not soon fling it from him, he would not be able to get rid of it at all; for the longer he kept it, the more

powerful was its attraction. The precious metal seemed as if it actually stuck to his hands ; and the more he weighed and balanced it, the greater, to his thinking, grew the weight, just as the cup had done in a former instance, to the no little danger of his soul from the fiend, and of his body from the water.

“It must be magic gold,” he thought to himself, “and the sooner I pitch it to the goblin, from whom it came, the better for me now and after.”

“Are you mad, fool?—are you mad?” exclaimed a voice close beside him, and at the same time his arm was arrested in the very act of hurling the treasure as far as he could hurl it.

Philip turned round hastily, when who should meet him face to face and eye to eye, but the ill-omened doctor, wrapt up in a large red cloak, with a lantern in his left hand, and grinning more diabolically than ever. The luckless miner immediately dropt the bag, and sprung back in dismay from the grasp of his suspicious visitant.

"What the devil scares the fool?" cried the doctor.

"The devil himself, I think," muttered Philip.

"What are you afraid of?" continued he of the red cloak, while his mouth seemed to elongate itself from ear to ear; "don't you know me, booby?"

As he said this he turned the light of the lantern full upon his own face. Philip remained silent.

"I come from your brothers," said the ominous red-cloak.

"Mercy on us!" ejaculated Philip—and then added in a lower tone, "it was not kindly done of them, though, to send you after their own born brother, poor dead and d——d souls as they are."

"If you have sense enough to follow me, your fortune is made," continued the tempter, again leering most abominably, and with a look that still more completely identified him in Philip's mind with the odious little imp of the giant's shaft. They must be one and the same person, he felt convinced, in spite

of some striking differences in figure. He was, however, prudent enough to keep this salutary conviction to himself, and, not well knowing what to say, returned no answer, which was about the wisest thing he could do. But the red-cloak was not to be put off so easily; he was, moreover, rapidly losing his temper, much as other fishermen are apt to do when the gudgeons wont rise readily to the bait.

“Do you hear, fool?” he exclaimed, while his eyes glowed like living embers—“your brothers have found a treasure.”

The miner was at once startled out of his silence.

“Ay, poor wretches, found a treasure, and lost their souls, no doubt.”

“That’s as it may be; my business is with bodies, not with souls,” replied the red-cloak.

“I shan’t trust to that,” thought Philip.

“But come, we have not a moment to lose; I have tarried too long already.”

“You’ll tarry a little longer, friend, before you catch me travelling your road,” said

Philip, though in so low a tone there was no fear of its being overheard.

“Hark!—the signal!” cried the red-cloak, stamping impatiently; and, as Philip afterwards declared,—but this was when he had repeated the story a hundred times,—a blue flame burst from the ground where his foot struck.

At the same instant a broad flash, like lightning, swept over the sea, and before it had well passed away, was succeeded by a peal of thunder. The doctor, if doctor he really were, again called upon the miner to follow him.

“I can stay no longer. Follow me, and your fortune is made.”

“Now, Heaven and all the Saints deliver me from any such fortune!” ejaculated the terrified miner.

At this declaration, he of the red cloak burst into an appalling roar of laughter, that to Philip’s ears had nothing earthly in it; it was louder and harsher than the thunder had been a minute before.

“So you won’t go with me?” exclaimed

the goblin. "Well, then, you must e'en live and die a poor rascally tinner, as your father did before you; and, good faith, it's all such a cowardly jolter-head is fit for. However, there's another sack of gold for you, and mind you use it wisely."

So saying, the tempter flung down a second bag, that rattled heavily as it fell upon the shingle, being evidently, from the sound, much larger than the first. He then slowly disappeared in the darkness, but, long after his figure had ceased to be visible, his light was seen travelling steadily along the waves.

"By the blessed Rood!" exclaimed Philip, after having watched it for several minutes—"by the blessed Rood, he walks as easily upon the water as I should upon the dry ground! I said it was the Old One—I was sure of it—but, thanks be to the Virgin, he's gone, and his treasure shan't be long in going after him, for it's easy to guess what would come of keeping it; I have had a taste of that already in the matter of the gold cup—so here goes. There's one for you, Old Beelzebub; and there's the other—and now we are

quits, and I only pray to Heaven I may never set eyes on you or your gold again."

Having flung both bags into the sea, as far as he had power to throw them, Philip considered that he had obtained a complete victory over the fiend, and one well worthy to rank by the side of the immortal legend of Saint Dunstan.

Full of the glory of his achievement, he returned to the village to impart his wise and valiant doings to his neighbours, and received from them as much honour and admiration, as if he had brought home the discovery of a new mine. For six long months he had the pleasure of finding himself and his story the subjects of universal interest, insomuch that he was fully entitled to consider himself the most famous personage in Saint Just. He was talked of, pointed at, and had even the supreme felicity of being commemorated in a ballad, written by a cobbler-poet, who had long been the glory of the town for his skill in mending shoes and making verses, though an unlucky wag once observed that, if he were to make his shoes, and mend his verses, it

would be the better for him in both trades.

However this might be, the song was chanted from morning to night by young and old, to the infinite glory of Philip; besides which, at a club held at the sign of the Three Jolly Maltsters, his adventures formed an unfailing topic of conversation amongst the learned of the parish; nor was it ever observed that his auditors grew weary of discussing their merits, or that any one doubted their reality, excepting the master of the free school, who seemed to have inherited all the abominable opinions of old Kirton. This unhappy little hunchback never could be brought to listen to any reason but his own, and would stand his ground against the mighty host of his opponents, unmoved by all arguments save one, which was a branch of what logicians term the *argumentum ad hominem*, and applied to his substantial interests.

He had rummaged out from some forgotten nook an old story of a former owner of the Huel-Rose, who, in the troublesome times of the Civil Wars, had secreted a quantity of gold

in the mine for its greater security, and, having fallen in battle, the secret of his hiding-place had died with him.

On this narrow basis he had constructed a beautiful building much to his own satisfaction, though it might convince no one else. "The treasure," he would say, "I doubt not Ralph lighted upon in emerging from the water in the inner cave, whither he was most probably carried by his drunken efforts to escape from the pool. Of course, he could not but know that, if his discovery were made public, he would be called upon to refund the gold to the owner of the mine, in whom the property of such windfalls was most unquestionably vested; and, therefore, with the help of his brothers, he quietly conveyed it away on the occasion of St. John's Eve, which took place on the following day, a time when no one was likely to interrupt them. The smuggling bark, of which he was Captain, and which brought him over, was close at hand, and then it is most probable they all went over to Holland, where they could enjoy the property unmolested."

"And pray," said Mr. Snufflebags, with a sneer of superior wisdom, "how do you account for the disappearance of the supposed doctor?"

Snufflebags, it should be observed, was naturally, from his office as parish-clerk, the champion of the orthodox believers in Saint Just and the parts adjacent.

"How do you account for the disappearance of the doctor?" he repeated, smiting the table, as a man who thinks he has just demolished his adversary.

"Very simply," replied the pedagogue.

"Simple enough, I'll be sworn," retorted the clerk, glancing round triumphantly at his admirers, who, seeing from his looks that he must have said something exceedingly facetious, responded to the joke, whatever it might be, with peals of laughter.

"Take me with you," said the hunchback, a little disconcerted at the rough play of this artillery; "I used not the word after your interpretation, but just as signifying a nodus, or knot, which was facilis—that is to say, easy of explication."

"Oho! you are at your hic, hæc, hoc,—your Latin, are you?" cried the man of the church, winking most knowingly at his lieges, who replied, as before, with furious cachinations, a sort of argument which does more to silence a man, when left alone in a dispute, than the clearest syllogism.

But the pedagogue went on with an obstinate ignorance of his own defeat; as Napoleon reproached the English general at Waterloo, he did not know when he was beaten.

"The doctor," he said, "most probably stumbled by some accident on the brothers as they were carrying off the treasure; they were thus compelled to buy his silence with a share of the booty, and, as he could not enjoy it here without exciting suspicion, he prudently went over with them to Holland, or wherever their place of refuge might be. It is the less surprising that he should have met them in their operations, as his business led him out at all hours and in all places. I guess, moreover——"

"I guess this, and I fancy that," exclaimed Snufflebags, interrupting the schoolmaster with

great heat, and in a tone that was meant by its mere weight to smother all opposition—"Good man, keep to your '*Propria quæ marrowbones*,' and leave these higher matters to us gentlemen of the church. I and the vicar are the best judges of what folks are to believe, even though they do spout Latin."

"You are right, Master Snufflebags," said Philip. "Lord love your stupid head with your guesses, and fancies, and hard words; dost think brother Ralph is such a heathen Turk as not to have taken me with him, if he had found the treasure you make such a splutter about?"

"Why, you forget, Master Philip, you did not choose to go when the doctor came for you; and I dare say he was not over and above pressing, as, the fewer to share the spoil, the better it would be for himself and his partners in the business."

"A marvellous likely tale!" retorted the miner. "Didn't I with my own eyes see the imp walk upon the water, as though he'd had a good deal flooring under his feet? and do you think a doctor—that is, a mere doctor

of flesh and blood, like any of us, — could cross the sea at that rate?”

“No doubt, if he were sitting in a boat; I see nothing to have prevented his crossing the Atlantic.”

“And who told you he was sitting in a boat? I saw no boat.”

“Because the night was pitch dark, and you were in too great a fright to know what you saw,—so there you have the whole mystery unriddled.”

At this period of the discussion —and it regularly reached this point with the last pipe — Snufflebags would gravely rise from his presidential arm-chair, and, looking round him with an air of authority, exclaim,—“At this rate we may go on doubting till we have doubted away the parish register.”

“I wish to heaven we could!” mentally ejaculated the school-master — *Nota bene*, — the worthy pedagogue had the misfortune to be married, which awful calamity was indelibly recorded in the above volume, a huge folio, bound in rough calf, with brass hinges, and secured from the eye of the pro-

fane curious by clasps of the same metal. In his facetious moments he was wont to call it the register of the parish sins.

"Yes," continued the clerk, the austere dignity of his visage increasing as he proceeded; "not only so, but, what is worse, we may go on to deny there ever was such a thing as a ghost or a witch; this is a piece of blasphemy that I trust no gentleman here would entertain for a moment, as in that case I should feel it my duty to report him as a black sheep to his reverence, the vicar, who would take his measures accordingly."

To this argument, though repeated every club-night, that is, once a-week, with very little variation, it was never found that the little hunchbacked schoolmaster could give any reply; it must therefore be considered decisive of the matter, and the tale of the Huel Rose becomes as much a matter of legitimate history as the achievements of the Maid of Orleans, or the labyrinth of Fair Rosamond.

THE
SEXTON OF COLOGNE.

IN the year 1571, there lived at Cologne a rich burgomaster, whose wife, Adelaide, then in the prime of her youth and beauty, fell sick and died. They had lived very happily together, and throughout her fatal illness the doating husband scarcely quitted her bed-side for an instant. During the latter period of her sickness, she did not suffer greatly; but the fainting fits grew more and more frequent, and of increasing duration, till at length they became incessant, and she finally sank under them.

It is well known that Cologne is a city

which, as far as respects religion, may compare itself with Rome, on which account it was called, even in the middle ages, *Roma Germanica*, and sometimes the *Sacred City*. It seemed as if, in after-times, it wished to compensate by piety the misfortune of having been the birth-place of the abominable Agrippina. For many years nothing else was seen but priests, students, and mendicant monks; while the bells were ringing and tolling from morning till night. Even now you may count in it as many churches and cloisters as the year has days.

The principal church is the cathedral of St. Peter—one of the handsomest buildings in all Germany, though still not so complete as it was probably intended by the architect. The choir alone is arched. The chief altar is a single block of black marble, brought along the Rhine to Cologne, from Namur upon the Maas. In the sacristy an ivory rod is shewn, said to have belonged to the apostle Peter; and in a chapel stands a gilded coffin, with the names of the holy Three Kings inscribed. Their skulls are visible through an opening—two being

white, as belonging to Caspar and Balthasar—the third black, for Melchior. It is easy to be understood that these remarkable relics, rendered sacred by time, make a deep impression on the imagination of the Catholics; and that the three skulls, with their jewels and silver setting, are convincing proofs of genuineness, to religious feelings—though a glance at history is sufficient to shew their spuriousness.

It was in this church that Adelaide was buried with great splendour. In the spirit of that age, which had more feeling for the solid than real taste—more devotion and confidence than unbelieving fear—she was dressed as a bride in flowered silk, a motley garland upon her head, and her pale fingers covered with costly rings, in which state she was conveyed to the vault of a little chapel, directly under the choir, in a coffin with glass windows. Many of her forefathers were already resting here, all embalmed, and, with their mummy forms, offering a strange contrast to the silver and gold with which they were decorated, and teaching, in a peculiar fashion, the difference between the perishable and the imperishable. The custom

of embalming was, in the present instance, given up; the place was full; and, when Adelaide was buried, it was settled that no one else should be laid there for the future.

With heavy heart had Adolph followed his wife to her final resting-place. The turret-bells, of two hundred and twenty hundred weight, lifted up their deep voices, and spread the sounds of mourning through the wide city; while the monks, carrying tapers and scattering incense, sang requiems from their huge vellum folios, which were spread upon the music-desks in the choir. But the service was now over; the dead lay alone with the dead; the immense clock, which is only wound up once a-year, and shews the course of the planets, as well as the hours of the day, was the only thing that had sound or motion in the whole cathedral. Its monotonous ticking seemed to mock the silent grave.

It was a stormy November evening, when Peter Bolt, the Sexton of St. Peter's, was returning home after this splendid funeral. The poor man, who had been married four years, had one child, a daughter, which his wife

brought him in the second year of their marriage, and was again expecting her confinement. It was, therefore, with a heavy heart that he had left the church for his cottage, which lay damp and cold on the banks of a river, and which, at this dull season, looked more gloomy than ever. At the door he was met by the little Maria, who called out with great delight, "You must not go up stairs, father ; the stork has been here, and brought Maria a little brother !"—a piece of information more expected than agreeable, and which was soon after confirmed by the appearance of his sister-in-law, with a healthy infant in her arms. His wife, however, had suffered much, and was in a state that required assistance far beyond his means to supply. In this distress, he bethought himself of the Jew, Isaac, who had lately advanced him a trifle on his old silver watch ; but now, unfortunately, he had nothing more to pledge, and was forced to ground all his hopes on the Jew's compassion—a very unsafe anchorage. With doubtful steps he sought the house of the miser, and told his tale amidst tears and sighs, to all of which Isaac listened with great

patience—so much so, indeed, that Bolt began to flatter himself with a favourable answer to his petition. But he was disappointed; the Jew, having heard him out, coolly replied, “that he could lend no monies on a child—it was no good pledge.”

With bitter execrations on the usurer’s hard-heartedness, poor Bolt rushed from his door, when, to aggravate his situation, the first snow of the season began to fall, and so thick and fast that, in a very short time, the house-tops presented a single field of white. Immersed in his grief, he missed his way across the market-place, and, when he least expected such a thing, found himself in the front of the cathedral. The great clock chimed three quarters—it wanted then a quarter to twelve;—where was he to look for assistance at such an hour—or, indeed, at any hour? He had already applied to the rich prelates, and got from them all that their charity was likely to give. Suddenly, a thought struck him like lightning; he saw his little Maria crying for the food he could not give her—his sick wife, lying in bed, with the infant on her exhausted

bosom—and then Adelaide, in her splendid coffin, and her hand glittering with jewels that it could not grasp. “Of what use are diamonds to her now?” said he to himself. “Is there any sin in robbing the dead to give to the living? I would not do such a thing for myself if I were starving—no, Heaven forbid! but for my wife and child—ah! that’s quite another matter.”

Quieting his conscience, as well as he could, with this opiate, he hurried home to get the necessary implements; but, by the time he reached his own door, his resolution began to waver. The sight, however, of his wife’s distress wrought him up again to the sticking-place; and having provided himself with a dark lantern, the church-keys, and a crow to break open the coffin, he set out for the cathedral. On the way, all manner of strange fancies crossed him: the earth seemed to shake beneath him—it was the tottering of his own limbs: a figure seemed to sign him back—it was the shade thrown from some column, that waved to and fro as the lamp-light flickered in the night wind. But still the thought of home drove

him on; and even the badness of the weather carried this consolation with it; he was the more likely to find the streets clear, and escape detection.

He had now reached the cathedral. For a moment he paused on the steps, and then, taking heart, put the huge key into the lock. To his fancy, it had never opened with such readiness before. The bolt shot back at the light touch of the key, and he stood alone in the church, trembling from head to foot. Still it was requisite to close the door behind him, lest its being open should be seen by any one passing by, and give rise to suspicion; and, as he did so, the story came across his mind of the man who had visited a church at midnight to show his courage. For a sign that he had really been there, he was to stick his knife into a coffin; but, in his hurry and trepidation, he struck it through the skirt of his coat without being aware of it, and, supposing himself held back by some supernatural agency, dropt down dead from terror.

Full of these unpleasant recollections, he tottered up the nave; and, as the light suc-

cessively flashed upon the sculptured marbles, it seemed to him as if the pale figures frowned ominously upon him. But desperation supplied the place of courage. He kept on his way to the choir—descended the steps—passed through the long, narrow passage, with the dead heaped up on either side—opened Adelaide's chapel, and stood at once before her coffin. There she lay, stiff and pale—the wreath in her hair, and the jewels on her fingers, gleaming strangely in the dim light of the lantern. He even fancied that he already smelt the pestilential breath of decay, though it was full early for corruption to have begun its work. A sickness seized him at the thought; and he leaned for support against one of the columns, with his eyes fixed on the coffin; when—was it real, or was it illusion?—a change came over the face of the dead!—he started back; and that change, so indescribable, had passed away in an instant, leaving a darker shadow on the features.

“If I had only time,” he said to himself—
“if I had only time, I would rather break open one of the other coffins, and leave the lady

Adelaide in quiet. Age has destroyed all that is human in these mummies; they have lost that resemblance to life which makes the dead so terrible, and I should no more mind handling them than so many dry bones. It's all nonsense, though; one is as harmless as the other, and since the lady Adelaide's house is the easiest for my work, I must e'en set about it."

But the coffin did not offer the facilities he reckoned upon with so much certainty. The glass-windows were secured inwardly with iron wire, leaving no space for the admission of the hand, so that he found himself obliged to break the lid to pieces, a task that, with his imperfect implements, cost both time and labour.

As the wood splintered and cracked under the heavy blows of the iron, the cold perspiration poured in streams down his face, the sound assuring him more than all the rest that he was committing sacrilege. Before, it was only the place, with its dark associations, that had terrified him; now he began to be afraid of himself, and would, without doubt, have given up the business altogether,

if the lid had not suddenly flown to pieces. Alarmed at his very success, he started round, as if expecting to see some one behind, watching his sacrilege, and ready to clutch him; and so strong had been the illusion, that, when he found this was not the case, he fell upon his knees before the coffin, exclaiming, "Forgive me, dear lady, if I take from you what is of no use to yourself, while a single diamond will make a poor family so happy. It is not for myself—Oh no!—it is for my wife and children."

He thought the dead looked more kindly at him as he spoke thus, and certainly the livid shadow had passed away from her face. Without more delay, he raised the cold hand to draw the rings from its finger; but what was his horror when the dead returned his grasp!-- his hand was clutched, aye firmly clutched, though that rigid face and form lay there as fixed and motionless as ever. With a cry of horror he burst away, not retaining so much presence of mind as to think of the light, which he left burning by the coffin. This, however, was of little consequence; fear

can find its way in the dark, and he rushed through the vaulted passage, up the steps, through the choir, and would have found his way out, had he not, in his reckless hurry, forgotten the stone, called the *Devil's Stone*, which lies in the middle of the church, and which, according to the legend, was cast there by the Devil. Thus much is certain,—it has fallen from the arch, and they still show a hole above, through which it is said to have been hurled.

Against this stone the unlucky sexton stumbled, just as the turret-clock struck twelve, and immediately he fell to the earth in a death-like swoon. The cold, however, soon brought him to himself, and on recovering his senses he again fled, winged by terror, and fully convinced that he had no hope of escaping the vengeance of the dead, except by the confession of his crime, and gaining the forgiveness of her family. With this view, he hurried across the market-place to the Burgomaster's house where he had to knock long before he could attract any notice. The whole household lay in a profound sleep, with the exception of the unhappy Adolph, who was now sitting alone on the same sofa where he had so often sat with

his Adelaide. Her picture hung on the wall opposite to him, though it might rather be said to feed his grief than to afford him any consolation. And yet, as most would do under such circumstances, he dwelt upon it the more intently even from the pain it gave him, and it was not 'till the sexton had knocked repeatedly that he awoke from his melancholy dreams. Roused at last, he opened the window and inquired who it was that disturbed him at such an unseasonable hour?

"It is only I, Mr. Burgomaster," was the answer.

"And who are you?" again asked Adolph.

"Bolt, the sexton of St. Peter's, Mr. Burgomaster; I have a thing of the utmost importance to discover to you."

Naturally associating the idea of Adelaide with the sexton of the church where she was buried, Adolph was immediately anxious to something more of the matter, and, taking up know a wax-light, he hastened down stairs, and himself opened the door to Bolt.

"What have you to say to me?" he exclaimed.

"Not here, Mr. Burgomaster," replied the

anxious sexton ;—" not here ; we may be overheard."

Adolph, though wondering at this affectation of mystery, motioned him in, and closed the door ; when Bolt, throwing himself at his feet, confessed all that had happened. The anger of Adolph was mixed with compassion as he listened to the strange recital ; nor could he refuse to Bolt the absolution which the poor fellow deemed so essential to his future security from the vengeance of the dead. At the same time, he cautioned him to maintain a profound silence on the subject towards every one else, as otherwise the sacrilege might be attended with serious consequences, it not being likely that the ecclesiastics, to whom the judgment of such matters belonged, would view his fault with equal indulgence. He even resolved to go himself to the church with Bolt, that he might investigate the affair more thoroughly. But to this proposition the sexton gave a prompt and positive denial.—" I would rather," he exclaimed,—" I would rather be dragged to the scaffold than again disturb the repose of the dead." This declaration, so ill-timed, con-

founded Adolph. On the one hand, he felt an undefined curiosity to look more narrowly into this mysterious business; on the other, he could not help feeling compassion for the sexton, who, it was evident, was labouring under the influence of a delusion which he was utterly unable to subdue. The poor fellow trembled all over, as if shaken by an ague fit, and painted the situation of his wife and his pressing poverty with such a pale face and such despair in his eyes, that he might himself have passed for a church-yard spectre. The Burgomaster again admonished him to be silent for fear of the consequences, and, giving him a couple of dollars to relieve his immediate wants, sent him home to his wife and family.

Being thus deprived of his most natural ally on this occasion, Adolph summoned an old and confidential servant, of whose secrecy he could have no doubt. To his question of—"Do you fear the dead?"—Hans stoutly replied, "They are not half so dangerous as the living."

"Indeed!" said the Burgomaster. "Do you think, then, that you have courage enough to go into the church at night?"

"In the way of my duty, yes," replied Hans ;
"not otherwise. It is not right to trifle with
holy matters."

"Do you believe in ghosts, Hans?" continued Adolph.

"Yes, Mr. Burgomaster."

"Do you fear them?"

"No, Mr. Burgomaster. I hold by God, and
he holds up me ; and God is the strongest."

"Will you go with me to the cathedral,
Hans ? I have had a strange dream to-night :
it seemed to me as if my deceased wife called
to me from the steeple-window."

"I see how it is," answered Hans : "the
sexton has been with you, and put this whim
into your head, Mr. Burgomaster. These
grave-diggers are always seeing ghosts."

"Put a light into your lantern," said Adolph,
avoiding a direct reply to this observation of
the old man. "Be silent, and follow me."

"If you bid me," said Hans, "I must, of
course, obey ; for you are my magistrate as
well as my master."

Herewith he lit the candle in the lantern, and
followed his master without farther opposition.

Adolph hurried into the church with hasty steps; but the old man, who went before him to shew the way, delayed him with his reflections, so that their progress was but slow. Even at the threshold he stopt, and flung the light of his lantern upon the gilded rods over the door, to which it is the custom to add a fresh one every year, that people may know how long the reigning elector has lived.

"That is an excellent custom," said Hans; "one has only to count those staves, and one learns immediately how long the gracious elector has governed us simple men."

"Excellent!" replied Adolph; "but go on."

Hans, however, had too long been indulged in his old, wayward habits, to quicken his pace at this admonition. Not a monument would he pass without first stopping to examine it by the lantern-light, and requesting the Burgo-master to explain its inscription. In short, he behaved like a traveller, who was taking the opportunity of seeing the curiosities of the cathedral, although he had spent his three-and-sixty years in Cologne, and, during that period, had been in the habit of frequenting it almost daily.

Adolph, who well knew that no representations would avail him, submitted patiently to the humours of his old servant, contenting himself with answering his questions as briefly as possible; and, in this way, they at last got to the high altar. Here Hans made a sudden stop, and was not to be brought any farther.

"Quick!" exclaimed the Burgomaster, who was beginning to lose his patience; for his heart throbbed with expectation.

"Heaven and all good angels defend us!" murmured Hans through his chattering teeth, while he in vain felt for his rosary, which yet hung as usual at his girdle.

"What is the matter now?" cried Adolph.

"Do you see who sits there?" replied Hans.

"Where?" exclaimed his master;—"I see nothing; hold up the lantern."

"Heaven shield us!" cried the old man: "there sits our deceased lady, on the altar, in a long, white veil, and drinks out of the sacramental cup!"

With a trembling hand he held up the lantern in the direction to which he pointed. It was, indeed, as he had said. There she sat, with the paleness of death upon her face, her

white garments waving heavily in the night wind, that rushed through the ailes of the church, and holding the silver goblet to her lips with long, bony arms, wasted by protracted illness. Even Adolph's courage began to waver.—“Adelaide,” he cried, “I conjure you in the name of the blessed Trinity, answer me—is it thy living self, or but thy shadow?”

“Ah!” replied a faint voice, “you buried me alive, and, but for this wine, I had perished from exhaustion. Come up to me, dear Adolph; I am no shadow; but I soon shall be with shadows, unless I receive your speedy succour.”

“Go not near her!” said Hans; “it is the Evil One, that has assumed the blessed shape of my lady to destroy you.”

“Away, old man!” exclaimed Adolph, bursting from the feeble grasp of his servant, and rushing up the steps of the altar.

It was, indeed, Adelaide that he held in his eager embrace—the warm and living Adelaide! who had been buried for dead in her long trance, and had only escaped from the grave by the sacrilegious daring of—*The Sexton of Cologne.*

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AN

ADVENTURE NEAR GRANVILLE.

Joy to those travellers who find a pleasure in foreign countries ! It was not with such feelings that I left England, and even now, after a twelvemonth's residence in France, I am as little reconciled to it as ever, and that from no fault either in the people, or in the country ; both are, in many respects, delightful ; but champagne itself is flavourless to a sick palate, and the fairest land is no better than a desert when the affections are pointing homewards.

I landed at Granville, with the intention of making France my place of abode for some years. At first, therefore, I set up my rest at

an inn, that I might have leisure to look about me, and find a permanent dwelling suited to my narrow income, and, as far as might be consistent with that essential condition, agreeable to my taste and habits. Fortunately, before I had been in the town three days, I heard of a house to be sold, that, from the description, I thought would suit me. It was small, cheap, not more than two English miles from Granville, and with no other fault, according to my informant, than its extreme loneliness. This fault, however, was to me rather a recommendation. I lost no time in seeking out the proprietor, who proved to be ostensibly a tailor, though, as I learnt by the way, he was shrewdly suspected of carrying on a more lucrative trade with our Guernsey and Jersey smugglers. This might well be, if any conclusion could be drawn from the exterior man, for certainly he had much more of the smuggler than the tailor in his appearance. He was a tall, gaunt fellow, with a sallow face, that was three parts overgrown with whiskers, that from their colour might seem the legitimate produce of a coal mine, while a broad scar across the cheek made him look

yet more ferocious. It extended down to the upper lip, which it had drawn considerably on one side, so that when he attempted to smile—and a Frenchman is seldom without a smile—it resembled nothing so much as the grin of an angry bull-dog.

But, however little promising the man's exterior, I had no reason to complain of him when we came to talk of business. His demands were extremely reasonable, and delivered in few words, with the plain frank manner of one who knows he is offering a bargain, and does not think it worth his while to tempt a purchaser by specious language. We soon, therefore, settled preliminaries. If I liked the house upon seeing it, I was to purchase it for my life only, a mode of sale not very common in France, I believe, any more than in England ; but it suited me well enough ; the price was proportionably low, a matter of the first importance with me, and I had no great wish to acquire property in a foreign land, even had I possessed the means.

The tenement in question was, as I have already noticed, about two English miles from

Granville, and was neither more nor less than an old-fashioned farm-house, in every respect, except size, far inferior to the worst cottages on the Acton and Ealing road. It consisted only of a ground floor, and a single story above, but there was room, and to spare, for a moderate family. Grates there were none, even in what seemed to be intended for a parlour; this, however, was the less necessary, as wood was the fuel generally in use, and it burnt as well upon the hearth as between iron bars. I ought, perhaps, to except the kitchen, in which was a sort of earthenware stove, about three feet high, with large circular holes in the top for the saucepans to be placed upon, any other idea than that of boiling or stewing never, as I suppose, having entered into the head of a French cook. The rest of the house was in perfect keeping with these arrangements; the sashes were about the size of four panes in the window of a fourth-rate London house; the bed-rooms were floored with brick; and the furniture, which was to be included in the purchase-money, was such as may be found in most English cottages, —not, to use Porson's phrase, "cottages of gen-

tility," but those of the Yorkshire farmer, which are a very different matter. Still the extreme cheapness of the house tempted me, and on the second day I entered into possession of my new abode, perfectly out of humour with myself and every thing about me. I would have given the whole of my domain, with its acre of garden and orchard, for a first floor in London, or, what I should have rather prized, a snug little cottage in my favourite Isle of Wight. But the thing was not to be.

Upon the recommendation of the tailor, I had taken into my service a girl from Granville, who, like Scrub, was every thing to her master—cook, housemaid, valet, and even gardener; nay, had I wanted a groom or coachman, I have no doubt she would have been both willing and able to officiate in either character. Madelon, for such was her name, was about twenty years old, and no less strange, to my eyes at least, in her costume than in her manner. Of the first, the principal singularity was in the head-gear, which, I believe, is peculiar to Granville and the parts adjacent. It consisted of two, or even more yards of coarse white calico,

folded something like a dinner-napkin, in which form it lies flatly upon the head, with the square corners brought down to either ear, and then turned back again upon the crown. A red handkerchief was crossed over her neck down to her waist, and there fastened. This last was joined, and partly covered by a white apron, with pockets in it, into which her hands were constantly inserted when she had no employment for them, or rather when she indulged them with a holiday, that she might talk with the greater vigour. Her gown was made of chintz, and open; her stockings were of grey woollen, smuggled probably from Jersey, and her shoes were nearly the same as those worn by our English ploughmen.

Madelon spoke English, as her friend the tailor said, and as she herself swore, "*bien—très-bien!*"—To give a correct idea of it would be utterly impossible; but when I say it was picked up in the school of the Guernsey and Jersey seamen, the reader will easily imagine it could be no other than elegant.

Madelon was a rogue, that was clear; I read it in her eyes and face, the first of which were

remarkably handsome, and the latter would have been equally so had it been less exposed to the weather; for beauty, after all, is a hot-house plant, and requires no little nursing to its perfection. But then the tailor gave her an excellent character, and she herself confirmed his account after a manner that in any one else had been downright impudence, but in her, by some strange alchymy, was converted into humour and simplicity. Madelon, therefore, upon her own guarantee, even more than that of her friend, the tailor, was duly installed in her four-fold office, being thus one degree better than the tripartite Hecate; and I who, in England, could not contrive to keep one servant, had now my cook, housemaid, valet, and gardener. In spite, however, of these advantages, and wine at tenpence a bottle, I was far from being comfortable, and twenty times a day I had to undergo Madelon's reproaches for my blue devils English, as she called it. "Eh! mon Dieu!" she would begin—"vous autres Anglois, vous êtes si tristes—so sad you English gentlemens! always ces maudits blue devils!

We have no blue devils in France but when you English gentlemens bring them from Angleterre. Ces coquins de douaniers should put a duty comme ça," spreading out her hands, "on de blue devils Inglis."

"Have patience with me, Madelon," was my answer; "I shall be merry enough, no doubt, when I have got a little more reconciled to absence from those I love in England."

"Love!—Ingeland!" the nearest approach I can make by letters to her mode of pronouncing England. "Love!—Ingeland!" in a yet higher tone. "Bah! C'est la France is the pays for love—G—d damn! You sell your wives in that maudit Ingeland!"

"It is the first time I heard of it, however."

"Ah, oui! All de Inglis sont des coquins—except Monsieur, and he is tout-à-fait un François."

"By no means, Madelon; I have no title whatever to that distinction; I neither sing nor dance."

"Ah quel malheur!—Mais G—d damn! I forget die garden. Pardonnez-moi, Monsieur."

And off flew Madelon, humming another of her hundred and one songs.

From this slight specimen it will be seen what sort of a treasure I had lighted upon in my Granvillian. In other respects she was invaluable. Never was so seemingly affectionate a creature, or one so assiduous in the discharge of all of her duties. A watch was superfluous to me with one so rigidly punctual. Did my breakfast appear? I was sure it was eight to a minute. Was dinner upon table? with equal certainty I might calculate upon its being four exactly. And, when at night she summoned me to my coffee, I was no less sure it wanted a quarter to ten. Nor was her attention given solely to these matters, which, as they were fixed and invariable, the observation of them was a point of no great difficulty; she seemed to have an intuitive knowledge of what I wanted, without the expression of my wishes, insomuch that the little hand-bell lay almost unused upon my table.

The month was June; the day fine; an unusual fit of cheerfulness seized me, and I felt, in my dark study, much as a school-boy feels

over his task, when the sun is shining through the window, and the young blood is boiling in his veins. I flung down my book—it was Goëthe's *Faust*—and walked into the fields that skirted my little domain.

Before the fervour of these feelings had exhausted itself, I met a poor French sailor, who did not indeed beg, but who continued for a long time eyeing me in a way that made me suppose that he wanted the charity, which, from some cause or other, he did not choose to solicit. Without, therefore, waiting to be asked, I proffered him a small piece of silver. The man stared at me in evident surprise, as if alms-taking was by no means a part of his trade; but he did not the less pocket my gratuity, returning me at the same time a profusion of thanks, probably as sincere, and certainly more gracious, than I should have received from an Englishman under the same circumstances. His manner induced me to enter into conversation with him, and when, in the course of it, he learnt that I was the owner of the near house, he testified his pity or surprise,—I knew not which—by a shrug of the shoulders, and a long-

drawn "Ah!" inimitable by any save a Frenchman. I was astonished in my turn.

"You don't seem to admire my house, friend; what fault do you see in it?"

It should be observed that this conversation was carried on in French,—indifferently enough, I dare say, on my part,—but still we could contrive to understand each other.

"What fault?—does Monsieur say, what fault?"

"Ay; what fault?" I replied. "The house is stout enough to last my time! is it not?"

Another long-drawn "Ah!" with a corresponding shrug of the shoulders and elevation of the eyebrows, was the only answer.

"If you have any thing to say," I exclaimed, "say it out at once plainly, that I may understand you."

He had nothing to say—"nothing in the world."

This of course did not satisfy me. I pressed him yet more closely, and at last brought him to confess that he looked upon the house as unlucky. At first I thought he was laughing at me; but he protested again, with great earnest-

ness, that the house was truly and notoriously unlucky.—“In three years it had been possessed by four different proprietors, who had all come to an untimely end. One had been found dead in his bed in the morning, after having gone to rest on the night previous in perfect health. A second had tumbled into the well, and been drowned”—that I by no means wondered at, considering the state of the wood-work about it, and, though I had not given it a thought before, I now mentally resolved to have it repaired without delay, that I might not be added to the list of casualties.—“A third, in an English fit of despondency, had hung himself on a pear-tree in the orchard.”

Here I interrupted his list of disasters, telling him, jestingly, that to prevent the repetition of any such accidents, I would have the pear-tree cut down.

“There are many trees, besides pear-trees, in that orchard;” replied my sailor significantly.

“But your fourth proprietor,” I said; “what became of him?”

“He was found dead in the high-road, with a bullet in his body—so Monsieur may see I

had some reason for calling his house unlucky. If it were mine, I would sell it before the day was over."

"And who is to become the purchaser?" I asked; for I had little doubt that the rascal was employed by some greater rascal, who expected, by alarming my fears, to get a good bargain of the house—perhaps the tailor himself; he was like enough to do such a thing if he at all repented of the sale. Had I been a jot less angry, I should have laughed in the fellow's face for his excessive impudence.

"Who is to become the purchaser?" I repeated.

"Not I, for one," replied the seaman; "Monsieur may be assured of that."

And, so saying, he set off on the road for Granville, just as the punctual Madelon came to summon me in to dinner, which, to her great annoyance, I had already kept waiting nearly a quarter of an hour—enough, as she said, to spoil any thing but English cookery.

But Madelon's disappointments were not to end here. Just as I sate down to table, in came an agent of the police, at sight of whom

the poor girl turned as pale as ashes, and I myself did not feel too comfortable, though I could not imagine what I had done in my retirement to draw upon me the attention of the authorities of Granville. Nor would the officer vouchsafe me a syllable in answer. Without bestowing a single look upon the terrified Madelon, he peremptorily bade me follow him, assuring me that he had at hand the means of compelling obedience if I were so unwise as not to yield it voluntarily. This was true enough. Without were three sturdy fellows in waiting, and I had, therefore, nothing left to me but to do as I was ordered.

From the marked incivility of the subaltern, I augured but unfavourably of my meeting with his superior. But herein I was agreeably disappointed. The Prefect (or rather Sous-préfet), a tall, dark man, with a keen, yet by no means unpleasant, expression of features, received me with the greatest politeness. His first words were to apologize for any uneasiness he might have given me, and the next to beg that I would be under no apprehensions. "His conduct," he said, "had its origin in motives

which he could not at present explain; but any thing rather than evil was intended to me personally.—

“You are,” he added, “an Englishman?”

“I am.”

“And probably have served in the army?”

“No.”

“In the navy, then?”

“No; my pursuits are literary.”

A dissatisfied “hem!” followed this answer; my examiner was evidently puzzled by it, and seemed like one who wavered in some pre-conceived purpose. At length he abruptly asked, “Are you a man of courage?”

There was something so ambiguous, and at the same time so absurd, in this query, that I knew not whether to laugh or to be offended. I replied, however, “That to ask a man if he had courage was about as reasonable as to ask a woman if she were chaste. What answer could he possibly expect to such a question?”

The Prefect smiled as he said, “I am quite satisfied; we may proceed to business.”

I was all attention.

“Your life will be attempted to-night—you

seem surprised ; but nothing can be more certain. Are you in the habit of keeping any weapons in your bed-room ?—pistols, for instance ?”

“ Undoubtedly ; I never go to rest, or travel, without having a brace of pistols at my side.”

“ Whatever you may see or hear, you must not make use of them on the present occasion—if, indeed, that has not already been provided against.”

“ How !” I exclaimed, “ not defend myself if I see a fellow in my bed-room ready to cut my throat ?”

“ No,” replied the Prefect, coolly ; “ you must not even speak, or move, or take any sort of notice, see what you will. Have you sufficient firmness for this ? if not, say so plainly : yet I hope better things ; I hope I am speaking to an English gentleman.”

I bowed—what else could I do ?

“ We understand each other, then ?” continued the Prefect ; “ you trust yourself to my vigilance, and promise to be perfectly passive, let what will happen ?”

“ Certainly—though I should have been

much better pleased not to have played so secondary a part in a matter where, as it seems to me, I ought to be the principal."

"I trust, in the end, you will have reason to think otherwise. At all events, I have your word that you will be passive?"

"Most assuredly."

"I am obliged to you for this confidence. Yet one thing more. You will be good enough not to breathe a syllable to any one of what has passed between us. Should your servant be curious——"

"I will be silent," I said, interrupting him, "though I have not the slightest reason to doubt her fidelity."

"Nor do I doubt it; but she might chatter, or she might be alarmed; and in either case she would equally defeat my projects."

"The first," I replied, "is impossible, as she has no one in the house, except myself, to talk to; the second, I grant, is likely enough, though I should not think Madelon was a woman to start at trifles either. I will, however, do as you wish me, and the rather as I cannot be supposed to be a competent judge

of measures of which I am utterly unable to divine the motives."

With this understanding I was dismissed, and returned home, not well knowing what to think of my first introduction to French justice. There was a degree of mystery in the whole proceeding that I might have laughed at had it involved less serious personal consequences. As it was, I sate down gravely enough to my half-spoilt dinner, Madelon besieging me all the time with a thousand questions in the style of familiarity so common among French servants. These were not direct, but put in the way of conjecture, as—"Ce maudit Préfet! Est-il possible, he trouble Monsieur! G—d damn! I fear you find him un peu bête."

"Pretty well for that, Madelon."

"Ah! c'est un misérable!—but, may be, he shall be trompé by his spies?"

"Not unlikely."

"Ah! I suppose he fancy Monsieur come to cut de heads off to all de Bourbons."

"That would, indeed, be doing things on a grand scale; but the Sous-préfet has not half your fancy."

"Ah, oui ! C'est un homme bête—vraiment bête. I should no surprise, if he take Monsieur for a smuggler."

"No."

"Tant mieux ! dere is hard law against ces pauvres diables de smuggelers. Peutêtre he hear Monsieur's garden a été volé, and wants to do you justice. En ce cas, je l'aime beaucoup."

"Nor that either."

"Diable !" exclaimed Madelon, driven by impatience out of her polite conjectures—
"Diable ! Pourquoi then ce bête, did he send his gens-d'armes after Monsieur ?"

"The fault was your's, Madelon."

"Mine !" said, or almost shrieked, Madelon, turning deadly pale—"mine !"

Seeing the poor girl so seriously alarmed, I was angry with myself, and told her, truly enough, I had spoken in jest only.

"In jest !" said Madelon, rapidly repeating my words ; "Monsieur was in jest."

"No more, Madelon—and that to punish you for your idle curiosity. But I care not if you know the truth. The other day I was at

Granville, when it seems I spoke somewhat too plainly of your blessed government, and this was carried to the Préfet by one of his spies, I suppose. Luckily, he contented himself with reading me a lecture on my want of prudence, and took my word for my better discretion for the future."

This explanation satisfied Madelon; though, I must own, my conscience smote me for adopting what appeared so useless a deception with the faithful creature. Still I felt myself bound, in honour, by my promise given to the Prefect, and let the girl go about her business without attempting to undeceive her—whether wisely or not, will be soon seen, for all this was but the prologue to a drama of fearful interest.

As the evening advanced, I began to feel,—not alarmed; I should wrong myself if I said so—but certainly anxious and restless. I protracted my supper as long as possible, to the visible annoyance of Madelon, who was at no time a friend to late hours; and when at length I retired to my bed-room, it was with feelings that I should in vain attempt to describe.

My first care was, of course, to lock and double-lock the door, and see to the fastenings of the windows: my promise to the Préfet did not prohibit me from this necessary act of self-defence. I next proceeded to examine my pistols; the charge was drawn, and, upon farther inquiry, I found my powder-flask had been emptied. The villains, then, were already in the house! They had begun their work by disarming me previously to the intended attack! For the first time, a suspicion flashed across my mind that Madelon, for as honest as she seemed, might be in the plot against my life. But what was to be done? I was alone and unarmed; and the murderers, it was plain, were already within the walls, so that it was fruitless to think of escaping. The slightest symptoms on my part that they were discovered would only precipitate matters, whereas, by waiting quietly for the tardy aid of the Prefect, I had some chance for life.

Just as I was preparing—not very wisely, all things considered—to examine my chamber, I was startled by a low whisper—so low, indeed, that no ears but those sharpened by a keen

sense of danger could have distinguished it. The sound evidently came from under the bed. My first impulse, since I was unarmed, was flight; but a moment's reflection—and moments are as hours in such situations—convinced me that to attempt leaving the room was the surest way to rouse my assassins, whose scheme it probably was to wait till I should be asleep. I took my measures accordingly, and with a calmness that now seems even to myself surprising.

My plan proceeded upon two suppositions—first, that in a short time the police would come to my assistance—and, secondly, that while I remained awake, the attempt upon my life would not be made. I, therefore, protracted my preparations for rest as long as I well could without awaking suspicion; and when, after having spent full half an hour at the toilette, I at last went to bed, I took a book with me, and left the lamp burning on the table by my side. To convince my enemies that I was watching, I read aloud, though I must frankly confess I hardly knew what I was reading.

On such occasions we count time by minutes,

and think and feel more in a single pulsation than in a day of common life. Half an hour had elapsed, and still there were no symptoms of the police. Oh, how in my heart I cursed the dilatory Prefect ! It was not to be expected that the assassins would wait much longer for my sleeping.

I was afraid to leave off reading, lest my silence, even for a moment, should bring on the catastrophe ; and yet I would have given any thing to be able to listen freely, that I might catch the meaning of the whispers, that began again, low as before, but quick and impatient. The crisis was evidently at hand. It was a terrible moment !—I do not hesitate to say so—a terrible moment ! Had I been armed, it had been something ; the consciousness of having the means to make a struggle must stir the blood, whatever may be the odds ; but to be locked up in the same room with a band of midnight murderers, defenceless, such a moment is terrible !

The whispering grew more and more frequent. Had instant death been the consequence, I could not have read a moment

longer. The book might be said almost to drop from my hand, and, scarcely allowing myself to breathe lest I should lose a single syllable, I listened to the almost inaudible whispers, till my ears tingled with the intense-ness of the application. I heard the cocking of a pistol, and knew the time was come,—when, to my infinite surprise, the door was gently lifted off its hinges, the screws having evidently been drawn and left loose for that purpose. Whether it was the effect of the air, upon the door being opened, or my moving, or only chance, I know not; but just then the curtain on that side of the bed, which I had tucked back when I first began reading, now fell forwards, and I could only see through it the shadows of two figures, without being able to distinguish the persons. As I lay with my eyes fixed in that direction, the light, which one of them held up as if examining the room, rendered their forms yet plainer. I could see that one of them carried a weapon of some sort in his hand, and that both were creeping stealthily towards my bed. Then there was a pause. I thought, from the action of the

hand, that the man, who carried the drawn knife or dagger, gave a sign to those under the bed: at all events, they were in motion. I heard a slight rustling, and, turning my eyes to the right, saw through the curtains on that side the shadows of no less than six men, rising successively from under the bed. The natural instinct of self-defence would have prompted me to spring into the very midst of them, and make a struggle for my life; but, before I could move, the shadows on my right flitted rapidly round my bed—a loud shriek followed—and, on throwing back the curtains, I saw Madelon and the tailor struggling in the hands of the police.

I now learned that the sudden deaths of my four predecessors in the possession of the house had long excited suspicion, and the rather as the property was always sold for the life-time of the occupant. This had led the Sub-prefect to imagine, as indeed was afterwards confessed by Madelon, that the tailor tempted purchasers by the cheapness of his house, and, having pocketed the money, he then made away with them as soon as possible,

that he might resume the property, and have the benefit of a fresh sale on the same conditions. But, however strong might be the Prefect's suspicions, the tailor managed his affairs too cunningly for him to get any thing like certainty on the subject ; and I might have perished, as my predecessors had done, to make room for another tenant, had not a little girl overheard the tailor settling with Madelon the time and manner of my murder. The child, naturally enough, lost no time in communicating what she had just heard to her parents ; and they, as a matter of course, carried the tale to the police. But, besides that she was very young—she was scarcely seven years old—she had, partly from fright, and partly perhaps from deficient understanding, contradicted herself so often in her story, that the Prefect had deemed it prudent to get more certain evidence by seizing them in the very attempt to murder. With this view, he had taken the opportunity of Madelon's being abroad in the afternoon, to introduce his people into my bed-room.

In the midst of my inquiries, the Prefect

himself made his appearance on the scene, with another party of his gens-d'armes, in a high state of exultation, as it seemed, at the success of his schemes.

"Eh bien, Monsieur! c'est un joli roman, n'est-ce pas?" was his first exclamation upon seeing me.

In reply, I gave him full credit for his ingenious management; but I could not help adding that he would have spared me no little anxiety had he let me into the whole secret before-hand.

"No doubt," he said; "but it is generally believed at Granville that there is a *liaison* between you and Madelon."

"Ridiculous!"

"Yes, indeed," continued the Prefect; "and I feared lest, in a fit of generosity, you should give the girl warning of her danger. In that case, I should have lost both my criminals."

"It seems hard though," I replied, "that a man cannot live quiet and secluded, without its being gossipped over a whole town that he is in love with his servant maid."

"Bagatelles!" said the Prefect.

“Well, but there is not a word of truth in it, I assure you.”

The Prefect shrugged his shoulders; and, saying that he should require my attendance at the police-office early in the morning, very politely bade me good night.

“Good night, Monsieur le Préfet!”

THE
SIEGE OF VIENNA.

I HAVE heard it said,—and they were no fools who said it,—that the romance of life was over, that the days of adventure were gone by; but how can this be, when so many volumes, quarto, octavo, and duodecimo, give the lie direct to the assertion? Every body now has his adventures; and they who cannot find monsters at home, contrive to make them in a twelvemonth's tour of the continent. There is no fatigue that a genuine tourist will not endure for the sake of talking of it afterwards, and if he is not lucky enough to meet with any

robbers, he is sure to hear of them, which answers his purpose every jot as well ; nay, I once had a friend, who, having travelled a whole year to no purpose, flung himself in despair into the English river Thames, but by some singular accident swam to shore instead of sinking, and afterwards wrote a pretty account,—a very pretty account indeed,—of his drowning and subsequent recovery to life. For my own part, however, I have been more fortunate; without stirring a step beyond my native city, I have seen and done enough to make a decent quarto, allowing the usual quantity of margin. In good truth, I may say that no one has *suffered* more for his country than myself, and I have no doubt that you will agree with me that all the terrors which have ever terrified poor human nature, whether by ghost or gunpowder, dirk or devil, are mere jokes to what I endured on that dreadful day when Vienna was bombarded by the French,—the horrible French!—the grinning, grimacing, chattering, swearing, cringing, dancing, frog-eating, man-killing, French!—But to my story.

This bombardment of Vienna took place in

the year 1809, on the 11th of May, at the hour of nine—exactly to a minute. I want no memorandum to recollect the date: it cleaves to my memory like the first whipping I received at school, and now it is my *anno domini*,—the centre-point to which I refer all the past, present, and future transactions of my life. Nor will you, my kind friends, wonder at it, when you have heard my story; oh, it will make your hearts ache and your eyes run over! It is, indeed, almost too terrible for belief; posterity will hardly credit the tale; I shall be called a Trenck, a Tott, a Bruce, a Munchausen; but, indeed, I only speak the truth, and that too with becoming modesty; Cæsar, himself, did not tell his tale with greater candour; and again, I boldly say that no one has *suffered* more for his native land than I have done.

When, in the Spring of 1809, Napoleon Bonaparte had advanced as far as Linz with the whole of the French army, my worthy friends and fellow patriots began to have fears for the city of Vienna, or,—to speak it more correctly,—for themselves in the city of Vienna; for, as to the imperial brick and mortar, that

was a trifling consideration. I, as in duty bound, being a colonel of volunteers, endeavoured to comfort them, and bade them take courage, though in simple verity I did not then know what courage was; when, however, on the 10th of May, the Duke of Monte Bello appeared before Vienna, I soon learnt what it was not, and that knowledge was, at least, worth the other half of the mystery. I felt a cold shudder creep over me at the sight of the Frenchmen, and I had very little difficulty in bringing over reason to the side of fear:—"Is there not danger?" quoth FEAR; "very great," replied REASON. "Is man," continued Fear, "educated, clothed, and fattened, at so much expense of time, labour, and money, only to be shot down like an old crow after all? would not any lean, ignorant, ragged rascal be just as good food for powder, besides being a great saving to the nation?"—"certainly," replied Reason—and certainly Reason was in the right: nobody shall persuade me that I have cost myself and my mother so much pain, only to be exposed to the discretion of a bullet—a creature that is proverbial for its want of dis-

cretion—a beast that makes no distinction of persons, and would as soon kill a prince as a peasant. Oh, the thing is not to be thought of; it is not good; it is not fit; it is abominable.

With this conviction, it may be easily supposed, I had no violent desire for fighting, though the enemy were Frenchmen; it was true, that I heartily hated the whole race of them, but then we are not bound to cut the throat of every man who does not happen to be to our taste. And yet what was to be done? As a colonel of volunteers, I could not handsomely run away from my men; and, indeed, there was much more fear that the lean slaves would run away from me, for my legs carried four times the load of any given pair in the whole regiment; and, therefore, were likely to be four times as slow in a retreat. Then, too, if by any extraordinary chance they should stand firm, my plight would not be a jot the better; with my rotundity of person I should be a bull's eye to the target, and every gun would be aimed at me; escape would be impossible.

Such were my reflections in the hungry interval between the laying of the cloth and the serving up of dinner, that tedious prologue which all cooks contrive to make as long as possible. This day, too, I thought it was longer than usual; but at last the fish made its appearance; it was a fine carp, and I had just tasted enough to be able to say so much without the imputation of rashness, when in bounced my cousin David, with the words, "The enemy will attack us this evening."

The carp turned to wormwood in my mouth; never in my life had I eaten so bitter a morsel, and though few had ever suspected me of being a conjuror, yet now I had the faculty of second sight, and of second *hearing* too, in full perfection.

And coming events cast their shadows before.

I saw the glitter of the French bayonets, and heard the din of the French muskets, though all the time there was neither bayonet nor musket within five miles of the city. But evening came, and with it came both the one and the other, when by a strange perversion of

things I could neither see nor hear distinctly : still, where my safety was concerned, I had a natural instinct which answered all the purposes of reason, and I clearly felt that it would never do to stay at home and receive a domiciliary visit from the bombs and balls ; for, in the first place, I reckoned that my quarter would be the chief point of attack ; and secondly, I held that any one's cellar would be much more convenient on the present occasion than my own attics, where the bullets would tumble fresh from the air.

All Vienna now was in confusion,—dogs barking, children squalling, women crying, and men swearing,—but by this time I had acquired inconceivable presence of mind, for while every body else was running without any definite object, I knew perfectly well which way I was going. With more speed than I had before thought my legs were capable of, I posted off to the opposite side of the city on a visit to my cousin Joseph, or rather to my cousin Joseph's cellar, which, at this moment, was to me the dearest spot on earth. I thought it, however, more civil to make himself the ostensible cause of

my coming, in which I believe that I only follow the fashion of most guests, whose visits are, generally speaking, less to the host than to his wine-bins.

With my cousin I found a stranger, who, by his pale face, evidently had an eye to the cellar as well as myself. He had on a blue-coat, and wore at his side a sabre of most terrific dimensions; if it had not been for the newness of his garments, I should have supposed him to be a poet, for he was as thin as a paper-knife, and, with the green feathers in his hat, looked prodigiously like an eel set up on its tail, and its head stuck with fennel. But poet or not, I felt he was, like myself, a coward;—and why should I be ashamed to own myself of that numerous fraternity? Cowardice may be a misfortune, but it cannot be a vice; valour is as much a gift of Heaven as the genius for poetry or painting, and if a man have it not by nature he will never acquire it by education; you cannot whip courage into a boy like the classics. But I am far from thinking cowardice a vice; on the contrary, I deem it a virtue of the highest order, a sort of necessary cement,

without which society would not hold together for eight-and-forty-hours; if all men were Cæsars, the world would be too hot to hold them. Nor do I at all regret that I belong to the cement of society, but rather am thankful to dame Nature for having been so economical to me in the article of courage; I shall live twenty years the longer for her discretion on this score, and twenty years of life are worth having to a man who eats three hundred and sixty-five good dinners in the course of the twelvemonth, not forgetting a suitable accompaniment of wine, ale, and brandy. Besides, I am no friend of killing, any more than of being killed; let those who think otherwise follow their own inclination; I have not the slightest objection to their stabbing, slashing, shooting, or otherwise slaying, any one, provided that one be not myself; but let them in return leave to me my whole skin,—a necessary article of clothing which indisputably belongs to myself, and myself only. The subject, however, is inexhaustible, and I must perforce leave that, as I left my cousin Joseph, to look after my troop of heroes.

With this view, I set off for the North Gate, and my step was as light as if I had been marching to a feast, so much had my courage risen with the certainty of a snug retreat in my cousin's cellar. Scarcely had I got over half the ground, when the stranger with the pale face was at my elbow.

"We are probably going the same way," said the pale-face.

"To the walls," I replied in a determined tone, and was myself almost terrified at the valour of my own voice. In fact, I began to fear that I was not a coward after all, and that my courage might lead me into some danger; of all my fears, however, that was the most superfluous.

"We shall have a dreadful night of it, I am afraid," said the pale-face, "the French are terrible engineers."

"Psha!"—I was growing bolder every minute,—*"Psha! dulce et decorum est pro patria mori."* Follow my example, and be firm."

"Such a mass of flesh may well be firm," replied the pale-face; "it is not a trifle that can shake it; but for a poor, meagre, lath-and-

plaster devil like myself,—why the very sneezing of an enemy would upset me.”

“Sir, Sir, be thankful to Heaven that you occupy so little space in the world; nothing but chance could ever direct a ball to an object so invisible; and, if it should, the breath of the ball would knock you down long before the lead itself could reach you.”

The pale-face was nettled at this remark; he began to grow personal, but I had an instinctive knowledge that he was more afraid than myself, and accordingly gave my hat the defying cock, and said:

“It is your good luck that I have other and more important business on my hands, or here should be my answer.”

With this I touched my sword significantly, and strutted off into another street in the hope of getting rid of him. Still I had some fear that he might follow me, and did not venture to look over my shoulder lest his pale face should be grinning there. Thanks, however, to my guardian saint, and my own admirable presence of mind, I got out of this troublesome

business without any other injury than a little ruffling of the spirits.

I found my company already at their post, and took it into my head to muster them, partly to show my zeal for the service, and partly to lay in a stock of reputation, while it might be had at a cheap rate; so that if my after conduct should call my valour in question, my present stoutness might be adduced in its defence. Of course, I expected to find that half my troop had forgotten to come, for it was natural to suppose that the worthy souls were animated by the same peaceful sentiment as their colonel; but no, there they all were, young and old, thick and thin, short and tall, resolved, like the Spartans at Thermopyle, to conquer or to perish. I thought it a pity so much good spirit should be suffered to cool, especially as it was likely there would be great occasion for it; so, to keep up the fire, I harangued them; quoted to them all the heroes of antiquity, like a bead-roll of saints—the school-master of the regiment had supplied me with their names—and was about to retreat again to my cellar, when the officers on the same station would

compel me to take an early supper with them, much against my inclination; not that I objected to a supper; I was too good a citizen for that; but my better genius kept whispering to me, "Go to your cousin's cellar; you know not what may happen." Would that I had listened to its suggestion!

The splendid appearance of the officers, and the smell of the hot meats, acted very kindly on my nerves. There was talking and laughing, and singing and swearing, drinking and eating, though no one knew whether the tables might not be turned, and himself be a supper for the worms before the morning. Even I felt the cheerful influence of the roast and boiled, and joined most vigorously in the patriotic toasts that followed rather closely on each other. In half an hour I had become a hero—a Bonaparte—when an unlucky varlet thought proper to drink, "To those who shall fall for their native land and Emperor!" Never was any thing more misplaced than such a toast; every eye too was directed at me, as if I were the destined victim, and they were drinking my safe journey to the other world. From that moment

my courage fell like the English stocks; the ringing of glasses was to me like the tolling of death-bells; and the voices about me sounded like so many requiems. If a chair fell, I thought the house was coming down; and if a door slammed, the bombardment had begun. Internally I vowed to get to some snug retreat with the first opportunity,—a measure which did not at all derogate from my patriotism, for the city would still have my good wishes; and as to my presence, my military talents were not so great but that the state might make a shift to do without me.

In amends for my deficiencies, my brother officers were all growing more and more valiant; they agreed, *nem. con.*, that the French would not dare to attack us; that they wanted troops, wanted time, wanted courage, wanted ammunition, wanted every thing, in short, but the inclination; and however strong inclination may be, it is not strong enough to knock down walls of brick and mortar. All this was convincing, and I was convinced, that is, my head was convinced; but I could not bring my heart over to the same belief, though the impossibility

of an attack was proved to a demonstration ; nothing could be clearer ; it was two and two make four. An officer of grenadiers, with a most heroic pair of whiskers, had the goodness to enter into a particular argument with me on the subject, and had just proved that not a cannon would or could be fired that night, when the clock struck nine, and at the first stroke it was as if heaven and earth would come together ; the bombardment had really begun. The whole assembly seemed, for several minutes, struck into lifeless statues, like the king's court in the Arabian Tale, each limb being fixed in its immediate attitude. My neighbour on the left had just brought a slice of pudding to his mouth, and there it remained immovable. My neighbour on the right had dipped his spoon into the gravy of a dish on which smoked a fine hare, and now it seemed as if he were feeding the animal that obstinately turned away its nose. Several knives and forks, that had only arrived half way to their respective mouths, were fixed in air ; and the jaws of my opposite friend, having dropped down to his breast, showed a cavity like the entrance to some unknown

region. The only sign of life in the assembly was with a lieutenant, who, when the first bomb fell, was employed in filling his glass, and now continued the same action, while the overflowing wine ran about on all sides. But this state of things could not last long ; the drums beat to arms, the company separated for their posts, and I set off for cousin Joseph's cellar, when, as the devil would have it, I was met by a multitude in full tide for the walls. To pass through them was impossible ; I squeezed myself close to the wall, hoping that the stream might pass by me ; but no ; it seemed as if the crowd were come for no other earthly purpose than to carry me to my post, whither I was borne by simple pressure in spite of all my resistance. Here I found my troop, their arms gleaming in the black torch-light. There was no retreating now, for one of the links shone on me most unmercifully, while the balls and bombs were whizzing like a swarm of cockchafers over our heads, or rather over my head, for every bullet was directed at me—at nobody but me. The object of the French seemed not so much to bombard Vienna, as my innocent person ; and,

what was still more extraordinary, the balls, one and all, had an intuitive knowledge of where I was to be found. Most willingly would I have retreated rather than expose my dear friends to so much danger on my account, for to stand near me was like standing near steel in a storm of lightning; but I could not move; the dense rows behind me prevented all hopes of flight, so that all I could do was to screw myself into as small a compass as possible, and trust the rest to Providence.

By this time some hundreds of bullets had passed over us without hurting any one,—a circumstance attended with the most beneficial effect on my companions. Their courage came to them as the danger seemed to lessen, at which I was not at all surprised; for it must be owned that nothing does so much injury to valour as the presence of danger. Some were even bold enough to talk of volunteering on the walls, when whiz! burst a bomb among us, and stretched several of my heroes on the ground. In an instant all was flight and confusion, and I of course felt it my duty to call back my men to theirs; so off I flew in pursuit of them,

running and bawling might and main, till by some accident I found myself deposited in an ice-cellar. Oh! I would not have exchanged it for one of the best rooms in the Emperor's palace. I was, however, far from being at my ease, being crumpled up in a corner amidst women and children, who were screaming, praying, scolding, swearing, and making a concert that only wanted the braying of the long-eared animal to be quite perfect in its kind. Some of my troops, too, had followed me to this place of safety, either from natural instinct, or because they held it incumbent on them to follow their leader in the paths of honour, even though they should happen to lead to an ice-cellar. Still there was a wall between me and danger, and I felt perfectly satisfied, though my crushed legs served as a seat for half a dozen heavy armed grenadiers; when, on a sudden, a dreadful crash was heard over head, and the walls of the cellar fairly trembled. Those who were before me fell plump against my frontal protuberance; those behind tumbled on my neck and shoulders, whilst at least twenty legs, and as many hands, garnished with the usual proportion of

claws, were digging at my sides. I firmly believed that the cellar was tumbling about us, and shouted most furiously; my men answered by a shout of corresponding vigour; with their bass mingled the tenors and sopranos of the women and children, and such a concert was raised as never had been heard since the siege of Troy.

By degrees our vocalists grew weary, and, at the end of half an hour, the boldest of the party took courage enough to express a hope that we were still living. I ventured to ask if the cellar had not fallen; no one in his own person had reason to suppose it, though each had believed his neighbour was not only dead, but comfortably buried without the assistance of a sexton. As soon, however, as we found that all of us were safe and sound, our valour rose to the very top of the thermometer; but it was quickly damped by the smell of smoke, that now crept in upon us from a thousand invisible crevices; every nose was agreed as to the fact, and a little consideration told us that we were sitting under a burning house, the smoke of which increased so much in a few minutes that we were almost

stified. Still no one could find in his heart to venture out from his snug retreat amidst the shower of bullets that rained incessantly. As a sort of compromise between terror and prudence, we opened the cellar door,—an expedient that was not without its evils, for it not only let in the air, but a party of troops, sent out to recall the runaways to their posts. Necessity, says the proverb, is the mother of invention; I bound my red pocket handkerchief about my head, groaned piteously, and besought them to let me have a surgeon, and, the fellows being tolerably drunk, my scheme succeeded. I again began to feel myself in safety, when a second party appeared with an equal affection for the ice-cellar. Unfortunately there was no room for these new-comers, and they, fancying our cellar contained a store of wine, threatened to storm our little fortification. Upon this, the garrison within took up their arms; the assailants without did the same; and in an instant we were threatened with a *bellum plusquam civile*. What could be more absurd? every shot must inevitably hit me, who stood in the centre. In despair, I cried out,

“Halt! I am the Colonel!” Whether it was the force of my voice, or the force of subordination, I know not, but the soldiers drew back without firing a single shot! At the moment I felt that I had achieved a victory; I felt myself a real patriot; I had by my own unassisted wit prevented a civil war, and saved my own life, as well as the lives of others. Truly, I began to think I was a hero after all, but that my valour had lain locked up in my heart, like the fire in a flint, and could only be called forth by collision.

It was not till the break of day that the bombardment ceased, when, with proper precautions, I thrust my head again into the open air. All was quiet, except in my own ears, that still rang with the noises of the night. I hastened, therefore to assume a military appearance, shook myself like a ruffled hen, cocked my hat valiantly, brought my sword to the proper position (it had travelled round to my right side)—took the handkerchief from my head, coughed thrice, and by the time I reached my company, looked something like a hero. My soldiers, too, had recovered their valour, now

that there was no occasion for it—my case always; just when I don't want Valour, I am sure to find him at my elbow; but the moment he is wanted, the ungrateful rascal runs away, and leaves me in the lurch—this by the way though.

Not one of my party was missing, save those who were wounded by the fall of the shell; all looked heroes, yet many who now wore most terrific faces smelt confoundedly of the cellar; my nose was too well acquainted with the smoke to be in any doubt about the fact; but I wisely held my tongue, and have ever since passed for a man of valour, and been known among my peaceful neighbours by the appellation of the *Colonel*.

HELL-FIRE DICK.

THE

CAMBRIDGE COACHMAN.

IF I were writing a romance, and therefore at liberty to lay my scene when and where I pleased, I certainly should choose some other hero. Now, this I have no mind to do, detesting from the bottom of my heart all works or fiction, as they are called, whether in prose or verse—or, rather, the more for their being in prose, inasmuch as I deem *that* a solid, useful article, and not to be wasted on idle leasings, while poetry, with all its trumpery of rhymes, metres, and metaphors, is good for nothing

that I know of except to be the vehicle of nonsense. If the matter rested with me, I would enact a law at once, making it felony to vest fiction in prose, and limiting lies, whether black or white, to the more genial realms of verse, so that every one might know to what he had to trust, which is far from being the case as things stand at present. After this little prelude on the score of heroes, I beg leave to commence my veritable history.

Richard Vaughan, or Hell-fire Dick, as he was more popularly called, was a coachman of high renown, who, about twenty, or, by our Lady, it may be some thirty-five, years ago, drove the Cambridge Telegraph, the only vehicle in which a student of any standing would condescend to be conveyed to the embraces of Alma Mater. Freshmen, indeed, who knew no better, were imported with other lumber in the heavy coach ; but a single term at college, if they had any proper spirit, was generally sufficient to make them scorn such vulgar doings and aspire to the guidance of Hell-fire Dick, the best of whips, and the prince of taverners, for, in addition to his other high-office, Richard

actually kept a hostel—I will not call it a public-house—in Trumpington-street. Here he was in the habit of entertaining all the choice spirits of the University, noble and ignoble, till some dull clod of a proctor, who had no soul for such high conceits, came forward, with power in the one hand, and ill-will in the other, to put an end to what he was pleased to term this course of profligacy. Under the pretence of regard for the morals of the collegians—as if collegians ever had morals!—he actually pulled down Richard's sign, that honourable banner, under which so many sons of Granta had fought their way through debts, duns, lectures, and impositions, to the dignity of A.B. It was a heavy day to all men of spirit—but let that pass : justice has been done to both parties by that fairest and most incorruptible of judges, Don Posterity, who has soused the poor proctor fathoms-deep in the waters of oblivion, while Richard floats snugly adown the stream of Time, without so much as wetting an ankle.

I was a freshman—though my gown had lost something of its vulgar gloss, for I was in my

second term—when I rode, for the first time, by the side of Vaughan, on his own box,—an honour that procured for me the undisguised envy of two senior *sophs*, or third-year men, who sate on the roof of the coach, immediately behind me. By means of an extra glass of brandy, and certain intelligible hints of a crown-piece to be forthcoming at the end of our journey, I had soon acquired a degree of favour with my companion; and, as we flew along at the rate of twelve miles an hour, he condescended to give me much valuable instruction, touching the whip-club, the prize-ring, and other similar topics, on which, sooth to say, I was not so well informed as might have been wished. I was, however, too discreet to expose my ignorance, more than need be, by any injudicious questions, a fault that I have observed some people are very apt to fall into; and, by saying no more than I was actually obliged to say, contrived to pass muster so well that he pronounced me to be a likely young fellow enough, and even went so far as to promise me his interest with the club, of which he was the worthy president. But, as men are not always

sensible of a good offer, I somewhat demurred to this scheme, objecting the character of the members of his learned institute, when he cut me short with—"Tell truth in Latin, my fine fellow, as Frank Watson says, when your green-horns are more bold than mannerly with their tongue. You have heard talk of Frank Watson?—short Watson we used to call him, for there were two of that name in your college—long Watson, and short Watson—though no nearer a-kin to each other than you are to Adam. The long one was as tall as a popular-tree"—this was Dick's usual name for a poplar, either as an elegant epithet, expressive of its popularity, or because, his researches being confined to other matters, he was not familiar with its more vulgar appellation—"the long one was as tall as a popular-tree, though I never heard there was much in him; he got the wooden spoon, I fancy; you know what the wooden spoon is?—steady, Bess! what are you about, you old jade?"—this last was an address, in parenthesis, to the off-leader, who was amusing herself with either biting or kissing her neighbour's neck; I was not learned

enough in the ways of horses to make out which——“but Frank, for a little one, was as tight a lad as any in Cambridge, be the other who he may——could manœuvre the muffles with any man of his hands; he was a prime scholar too, a *senior op*, and lost the gold medal only by a neck. And then he had such a mort of queer stories!—be quiet, you old jade!”——a second apostrophe to the frolicksome lady Bess. ——“It was in this very bit of the road—ay, right down by the old oak yonder—that we nearly got upset while I was listening to his tale of Flam Hall; and a droll one it was, too. Surely”——a strong accent on the last syllable ——“surely you have heard talk of Flam Hall? —No?—why, it was from that came the saying, ‘Tell truth in Latin.’ If you have not heard the story before, you may as well hear it now; and I do not much mind if I tell it you.”

I protested that I should take it as a great favour; and Dick accordingly commenced, though I should premise that, in repeating the tale, I do not undertake to give it word for word in his language. To do that might baffle

a better memory than I can pretend to ; for he had a peculiar dialect of his own, borrowed from no time and no province, and to speak the truth, if given in its native purity, much of it might sound rather oddly to those who have been used to the prejudices of polite conversation.

Ο Ρικαρδος *πρωλογιζει*—or, as it may be familiarly rendered, Hell-fire Dick beginneth his narrative :—

“ Frank—I always call him Frank, as I have good right to do, for we were hand-and-glove—Frank, with all his mettle, had some queer fancies at times. After kicking up the devil’s own delight for weeks together, drubbing the townies, bullying the proctor, and cocking his cap at the vice-chancellor himself, he would sit you down as quiet as a lamb, and muz over his books as if there were no more spirit in him than in a dead horse. Then, too, he had an odd taste for vagabondizing—taking a tour, I think, he called it—amongst the most out-of-the-way places, where, for miles together, there was not such a thing as a turnpike-road to be seen, or scarce a road of any sort, that, to trot

upon it for an hour would not break the heart of any beast but a Welsh pony. Well, one day, Frank, who had been paddling it on the hoof ever since sunrise, up hill and down hill, found the night closing in upon him, and no house near. It was bitter cold, too, being the fag-end of autumn, and, to mend matters, there was every chance of a heavy storm. As he looked up, the clouds came sweeping along from the north-east, and the stars seemed to go out before them, one after another, like the dying sparks from a sky-rocket, till at last one only remained in a space of blue no larger than you might cover with your hat. Even that did not escape long; the clouds still drove on, surging over the little twinkling light, first in thin vapour, then thicker—thicker—thicker—like the rising tide on a rock, till it has overwhelmed it; and all this time the wind was not idle; it whistled over the naked heath on the sides of the hill, and rushed and roared amongst the trees in the low ground he had just left, that you would have thought it was the sea beating on a shingly beach. Frank, indeed, was somewhat of that way of thinking, though

he did not well know how it could be; and he almost expected, on reaching the brow of the hill, to find the water before him. He kept on, however; for, be it as it might, he could hardly be worse off than he was, sea or no sea on the other side of the mountain. But, as luck would have it, things turned out better than he expected; on coming to the top of the ascent, he found a wild, gravelly common, stretching away on all sides into the darkness, and saw several lights twinkling dimly at a distance, though it was too far off for him to tell whether they belonged to one house or many. Not that this was of any consequence, so that there was some place where he could get shelter, for he had no fancy, as you may suppose, to pass the night out on this bleak waste, under the pouring rain, or it might be a storm of sleet and hail, after having trudged it till he was scarcely able to keep on his feet any longer. So, on he walked, as quickly as a weary man could do, and with a merry heart, though his road was none of the best or safest; this moment he was up to his chin among the furze, that scratched and tore him worse than the

worst shrew of a hundred; and the next he was wading knee-deep in a quagmire, from which it was a miracle he ever got out again; and when he did, lo, and behold! the lights had all vanished.—‘There is witchcraft in this,’ thought Frank to himself; ‘or is it possible that, in struggling out of that confounded swamp, I have changed my path, and got something between me and the building? I’ll on, however.’ And he did go on—for Frank, as I said before, was a stout-hearted fellow—and, to his great joy, suddenly came again upon the lights, which, it might be, had been hidden from him by a small enclosure of firs, growing to the right—the only things, above a furze-bush, that could possibly thrive in such a heap of sand and gravel. It was now plain that he had a large building before him, and, as he drew yet nearer, it clearly shewed itself to be an inn, for the moon, which just then peeped out from a mass of broken clouds, shone full upon the sign, a rampant red lion, which swung to and fro with no little noise in the night-wind. This was a pleasant sight enough to a weary man, on a bleak heath, with

a fierce storm brewing up; the sounds, too, that came from within, of laughing and talking, and clattering of pewter pots and glasses, were no less agreeable to the ear than the Red Lion was to the eye, so, using no ceremony where no ceremony seemed to be needed, he entered the public-room, and planting himself before the fire without noticing any one, began to call lustily about him for the landlord.

“ ‘What may be your pleasure?’ asked a man, who sate smoking and drinking at the head of one of the small tables, surrounded by half a score of toppers—and right jolly toppers, too, if any faith might be placed in the evidence of their huge, tunlike forms and rubicund noses—‘I am the landlord, Master Nicholas Barnaby by name, at your service.’

“ ‘Well, then, Master Nicholas Barnaby by name,’ replied Frank, not over and above pleased at the innkeeper’s tone, and still less at the cool assurance with which he kept his seat, smoking on, as if the new guest were nobody, ‘I want three things—meat—drink—bed.’

“It seemed that Mr. Nicholas read in Frank’s

face the low state of his pocket ; for your landlord is as cunning in these matters as an old horse at the sight of a halter ; you need not think to catch either of them by shaking an empty sieve. Instead of getting up from his chair to welcome his guest, he coolly said—‘ For your drink, there is plenty of water in the pond hard by ; for your bed, you may have the whole common to yourself, and none to interrupt you ; and for meat, you may even make a shift for one night, or, if that likes you not, you have only to go on some twelve miles or so, and it’s a guinea to a shilling—unless you lose your way in the forest, or get swamped in the fens—but you light on the *Cat and Fiddle*, where, I’ll be bound for it, you may have as much, or more, meat than you can pay for.’

“ Frank had a marvellous inclination to repay this advice by stretching the giver of it at his full length on the floor ; but then Frank was a man of judgment as well as valour, and on eyeing mine host accurately, to know where to plant his blow with the most effect, he saw that it was better left alone. Mr. Barnaby was a

tall, raw-boned fellow, with the arms of a blacksmith, the neck of a bull, and a huge round head that, from its evident thickness, must have been impenetrable to every thing short of a musket-bullet. He, therefore, thought it his wisest plan to treat the whole as a joke, seeing that, if he did otherwise, there was every chance of his getting a broken coxcomb for his pains.

“ ‘Good, mine host,’ he said; ‘I like no part of your counsel so well that I should follow it at the risk of the fen on the one hand, and the forest on the other, though I will not deny that the water may be plenty enough, and the heath wide enough. If I must fast—for which, by-the-by, I see no occasion when your tables are so well covered—but, if I must, it will be pleasanter abiding my penance before a warm fire than on a cold common. So, here I set up my staff for the night at least.’

“To shew that he meant to be as good as his word, he drew an arm-chair to the fire, ensconced himself snugly in it, and, taking his night-cap out of his pocket, popped it on his head with as little ceremony as if he had been in

his own bed-room. There was something so irresistibly ludicrous in all this that the company shouted again, while even Mr. Nicholas was pleased to relax a little from his austerity. A grim smile mantled over his hard features, and he looked, or rather he meant to look, somewhat more graciously on the intruder; but, owing to the obliquity of his vision, his right eye, missing Frank, shot a desperate glance at a big-bellied green bottle in the window, while his left expended all its force on a tea-kettle that was singing away over the fire with uncommon gaiety.

“‘So,’ he said, ‘it seems you have made up your mind to stay here, whether I will or no?’

“‘Truly have I,’ replied Frank, leisurely stretching out his feet on the fender, like a man very much at his ease, and determined to be still more so. ‘I have no mind for the common to-night ; so you may as well, for the credit of your house, let me have a quart of humming ale, with the bread and meat conformable, and a comfortable glass of punch, when all’s done, to qualify the crudities of the stomach and keep

off the night-mare. It would be a scandal to the Red Lion, for ever and a day, if I should sup on poor diet, or, what is worse, fast on no diet at all.'

"There was no resisting Frank's good-humoured impudence; and Mr. Barnaby, though as cross-grained a brute as ever set up a sign-post, found himself in a manner compelled to do his guest's bidding. He gave up his own seat to him at the table, and placed before him a tankard of brown ale, with the cold remains of a noble sirloin, and its usual accompaniments of bread and mustard, upon which Frank fell, tooth and nail, with such an appetite as is only to be got by fasting for eight or ten hours in the bleak air of the mountains. In a short time, he had made himself quite at home with the good company. He hobbled and nobbed with those nearest to him, brandished his tankard by way of signal to those who were too far off for the closer ceremony of clinking cups; and, as one poor quart was insufficient for so many toasts and pledges, he was fain to call out for a fresh supply.

" 'Come, landlord,' he said; 'the bottom of

the cup cries, tink, tink! let us have an *editio secunda, auctior et emendatior*,—or, for your better understanding, a tankard twice as big, and twice as full, as the last. And, good Mr. Barnaby—excellent Mr. Barnaby—let us have no frothings up of the ale-pot: I love to see the top of my liquor as smooth and clear as a mill-pond. It is a sin to waste the good creature in foam and froth, as if it were so much soap-suds for a school-boy to blow away in air-bubbles.’

“The landlord guessed at once that Frank was no youngster, on whom a host might impose short measure and long reckoning; but he liked him not a jot the more for that, though he took care to draw his ale of the best, and in a handsome quart that the gauger himself could not have quarrelled with, at the same time, scoring up this new offence to Frank’s account with the rest of his transgressions—namely, his forcible entry upon the premises of the Red Lion; his persisting to stay when desired to take himself off; and last, not least, usurping the place of joker-general to the company, to the utter eclipse of the said landlord,

who had hitherto filled the post with distinguished honour to himself, and to the no small satisfaction of his guests. The total of these offences amounted to a handsome sum, which mine host promised himself to pay off to the last farthing; and, indeed, I have always observed that, however slow folks may be in money-matters, they are more than sufficiently alert in bringing things to a settlement, when they are indebted to any one in an account of ill-will for offences real or imaginary.—But the occasion was not yet come.

“After a time, when the punch had circulated freely, the conversation turned upon ghosts—no unusual thing, at such an hour, and with such a meeting. This was the landlord’s strong ground; he had at one time, before he succeeded by the death of a fat uncle to his present inn, been sexton to the parish—which, by-the-by, accounts tolerably well for his spare figure and lugubrious visage, points otherwise perfectly unintelligible in an inn-keeper, who, by his vocation, is bound to shew, in his own person, the happy results of good living. From his former trade, he had naturally got upon a

familiar footing with ghosts and goblins ; and he now struck into the conversation with the tone of one who feels he is master of his subject, and has a right to dictate to his more ignorant companions. But, while the rest of the company listened with awe and wonder to his terrible stories, now told for the nine hundred and ninety-ninth time, Frank only leered with his little, peery eyes, wrinkling his nose to and fro, that was as supple as the proboscis of an elephant, and, though he said nothing, gave evident tokens of his not believing a syllable. This nettled mine host, who felt, he knew not why nor how, that his genius was cowed and rebuked by that of his guest, as Antony's once was by that of Cæsar. If any thing could have added to the dislike he already entertained for him, it would have been this ; and, certainly, to find another obstinately bent on disbelieving one's creed, no matter what may be the subject of it—a point in politics, or a point in pin-making—is such an insult as no man, with a proper sense of his own dignity, would submit to, unless he wanted the means of resenting it. Now mine host, so far from being blind to his

own extraordinary merits, was firmly of opinion that to differ from him, on any topic whatsoever, was to be a knave, or a fool at the least; and it was with more indignation, than he thought it prudent to avow, that he attacked Frank on the score of his infidelity.

“ ‘Ay, ay,’ he exclaimed, ‘there is many a one can look as bold as a lion, with the fire blazing on the hearth and a score of jolly companions about him, who would quake most confoundedly at being alone for half an hour in a church-yard at midnight. I wish you would try the experiment.’

“ ‘Much obliged to you,’ said Frank; ‘but, although I don’t object to an hour’s *tête-à-tête* with your ghosts, I have a particular dislike to such a storm of rain and wind as I hear just now, beating against the windows, and blowing round the house-top as if it intended to carry off the chimneys.’

“ ‘As to that matter,’ replied the landlord, ‘there is no occasion for your wetting so much as a finger, or having a hair on your head blown awry. I can shew you to a place where you may meet with goblins enough, without

stirring out of the house, since you are so dainty of yourself. But, twenty crowns to a single golden guinea, you have not heart to undertake the business, with all your bragging.'

" 'Done !' said Frank, who was not sorry for this opportunity of filling his purse, which was at so low an ebb it was a chance if it served to pay his reckoning in the morning.

" 'And done !' echoed mine host, equally well pleased, on his part, that he was likely to clear off the accumulated scores of the evening with his guest ; for, if tradition spoke truth, the ghosts of the Prior's Gallery were no jokers.

" Here I should mention, though Frank did not learn it till afterwards, that the inn was a portion only of the ruins of a large mansion, which had formerly gone under the name of *Flam Hall*, and was even now so called by the elders of the nearest villages. By one of those strange fatalities, which will sometimes occur in real life as well as in the pages of romance, it so happened that the heirs of the estate died, through five descents, in such rapid succes-

sion that in no one instance was death separated more than a twelvemonth from inheritance. Hence a superstitious dread seized the family, as if death were the necessary result to any heir who should venture to live in the mansion; and accordingly it was abandoned, with all its furniture, its rich carpets, its splendid hangings, its tables of carved ebony and of woods yet more precious than ebony, to the rats and owls, who soon established a mighty colony within the deserted walls. Even the family portraits shared the same fate; for it was argued, with a degree of superstition common to those times, and not perhaps quite a stranger to our own, that, like the plague, the mysterious cause of death might lurk not only in the building, but in all connected with it. In this state it remained for half a century, when the uncle of the present tenant got a lease of the ruins, and turned the better part into an inn, the low rate of the rent serving, in a great measure, to qualify the evil report that even yet clung to them, surviving what may not be unaptly termed the natural life of the building. But though it soon appeared that the curse of

premature death, incident on inhabiting the forbidden mansion, did not extend to strangers, yet the bold taverner was not without his troubles. In a short time, he found it was not enough to satisfy a living landlord by the due payment of his rent on quarter-day; the dead lords of the place had, it seemed, their privileges also, in which they were not to be controlled, and, instead of resting quietly in their graves, like other honest folks, they were sure, every night, fair weather or foul weather, to haunt the portrait-gallery, more generally known by the name of the Prior's Gallery, from the full-length figure of some defunct prior on the stained glass of the eastern window. As, however, the ghosts were modest enough to limit their pretensions to this one room, and were moreover well able to defend their rights, as appeared by their having severely drubbed the few bold spirits who had ventured to do battle with them, the new tenant did not think fit to dispute the point any farther, but double-locked the door, and left them in quiet possession of the domains to which they had shewn so good a title. Such was the state of affairs, at the

Red Lion, when Frank laid his wager with the malicious landlord.

“ But now another difficulty arose ; Mr. Barnaby had no mind to shew his guest the way to the haunted room at such an hour, unless backed in the perilous adventure by at least some half-dozen of the company ; the company had just as little inclination for thrusting themselves into a hazard that nowise concerned them ; and Frank, for his part, loudly protested against passing the night in a cold, damp room, without a fire. For some time, this obstacle threatened to prevent the decision of their wager ; but, at last, the landlord, who had set his heart on getting his unwelcome guest into a scrape, succeeded in persuading the boon companions to rise in mass, and lend him their protection to the Prior’s Gallery. It cost him, indeed, the promise of a bowl of punch in requital of this good deed, to be brewed at his own proper cost and charges. But what is a bowl of punch, though it were as big as a water-bucket, to the pleasure of gratifying one’s malice ? Besides, it was only requisite to employ a little of the host’s alchemy upon the

bills already incurred during the evening, setting down quarts for pints, and shillings for sixpences, with a few other slight tricks, such as every landlord of any sagacity is familiar with, and, in the long-run, he would not lose so much as the value of a nutmeg.

“Comforting himself with this fair prospect of making good any expense he might incur in the prosecution of his scheme, he swung over his brawny shoulders a basket, which stood by the fire, with dry billets ready split for use, and sallied forth for the Prior’s gallery, followed closely by Frank and the rest of his guests, each carrying a candle; for your ghosts have ever been known for ill friends to light, be it of what kind it may—torch-light, or day-light. On the present occasion, more particularly, the precaution came not amiss, in more senses than one; for the haunted room lay at the very extremity of the building, and the way to it was precisely such as might be expected to lead to the dwelling of a ghost, being much less convenient than picturesque. You had to go up stairs, and then down stairs, and then again up stairs, over floors not always

safe, through dreary corridors that led to no less dreary rooms, and through rooms that appeared to have been built for no other earthly purpose than as a way to passages. The wind, too, howled through the rents in the walls and the broken windows, that it was as much as they could do, with all their care, to keep the candles a-light; and, by the time they reached the door of the gallery, I warrant you there was many a pale face amongst them. Here the landlord made a dead halt.

“ ‘Well,’ said Frank, ‘why don’t you open the door?’

“ ‘Why don’t I open the door?’ repeated mine host;—‘humph! there are two words go to that bargain. Since you are not afraid to sleep in the room all night, I don’t see why you should be afraid to be the first to enter it.’

“ ‘And who told you I was?’ said Frank;—‘give me the key, blockhead! and we’ll soon see if your ghosts dare to shake their beards at Frank Watson.’

“ ‘There it is, Mr. Watson—since it seems your name is Watson,’ replied the landlord;

‘but I wish you would not talk after that fashion—at least while we are with you. I have no mind whatever to quarrel with the good folks within.’

“The door, as I have already observed, was double-locked. At the first turn of the key, the bolt shot half back with an ominous, grating, sound, not very pleasant to the ears of the guests, who instantly, as if they had been one man, made a sort of demivolte to the right; and there they stood, ready to fly on the first alarm, yet still too curious to retreat without some more immediate and tangible cause of terror. It was an awful moment!—the bolt again grated, and Frank was forcing open the door, which was too much swollen by the damp to give way readily, when a trembling hand was laid upon his arm; and mine host muttered, in a voice scarcely intelligible from fear—

“ ‘Stop a moment!’

“ ‘Why?—wherefore?’ cried Frank, turning round hastily.

“ ‘I thought I heard something stirring within,’ replied Mr. Barnaby, in a yet lower key.

“ ‘ So did I,’ whispered one of the guests.

“ ‘ Listen !’

“ ‘ Nonsense !’ said Frank ; ‘ the surest and the shortest way to learn if any one be within is to go in ourselves.’ —And he threw the door wide open.

“ At this moment had an owl hooted, a bat flapped his heavy wings across them, or even a beetle dropped from the ceiling on any of their lights, the whole party had infallibly been put to flight ; but as, luckily, none of these dire portents happened to alarm them, they followed their more courageous leader into the haunted room, though with hearts beating somewhat higher from the expectation of what might be before all was over.

“ The gallery, however, which not a little resembled the interior of a chapel, had nothing particularly suspicious in its appearance. It was a long room, lighted, awkwardly enough, at either end, by a stained window, that occupied the entire height and width of the building, while the sides were divided into panels, on which were painted the ancient lords and ladies of the mansion, from the first

possessor down to the last who had died within its fated walls.

“The same chairs occupied the same places they had done a hundred years before; tall, ponderous fellows they were, with backs as long as an American’s, and red damask cover-lids over a plentiful stuffing of wool, on frames of ebony. To match these were two immense tables of the same wood, richly, if not elegantly carved, more particularly about their massive legs, which were as tattooed as the skin of an Indian, and of weight enough to break down the floor of any drawing-room, such as drawing-rooms are in our degenerate days, when it is much if the building outlives the builder.

“The huge fire-place held no grate, probably never had done so; for a dog, as it is even now called in some parts of the country, still occupied the hearth-stone. This dog was no more than four iron bars, crossed and held together by rivets, but was sufficient for all the purposes of a wood fire, which the landlord now hastily set about kindling, for he, as well as his guests, always excepting Frank, had by this time seen quite enough of the

Prior's Gallery to wish themselves safe back again in the kitchen—not, as I said before, that there was any thing particularly alarming about it; but still, from having been so long abandoned, it had an air of desolation, that, when one thought of the tales connected with it, might make a man feel somewhat nervous, even if he had a stouter heart than could be pretended to by any of the good company at the Red Lion.

“The dust of half a century was lying on the dark oak floor, the mildew hung upon the walls, and the spiders had drawn their grey nets from window to window, while yet, to the great surprise of every one, the pictures, though much faded by time and the damp, were as clear from dust or cobwebs as if some friendly hand had taken them under its particular superintendence. The guests shook their heads anxiously as they pointed this out to each other, though their remarks did not go beyond a few broken whispers; and glad men were they when they had closed the gallery-door on Frank, and were on their way back to the kitchen.

“Not a soul in the house went to bed that night. There was something so cheerful in the sight of a blazing chimney and a score of human faces, that no one could prevail upon himself to quit such comforts for the loneliness of his bed-room ; so they all agreed to keep their valour warm by huddling close together about the fire ; and in this way, with the additional help of the punch-bowl, they contrived to pass the time tolerably well till the clock struck twelve.

“At this signal, the storm, which before had been quite loud enough, now burst upon the house with redoubled fury ; the wind howled along the ruined passages like a strong man in agony ; every door and window shook and rattled, that you would have thought a legion of fiends were clamouring for admission ; and this tremendous hurly-burly was kept up at least for ten minutes ; but then the tempest sank into its former state of comparative calm, and the rain began to fall more heavily.

“There is no such excellent stimulus to remorse as a strong dose of apprehension. Mine host, who had been not a little cowed

by the late war of elements, began to entertain some serious alarms for the fate of his guest, and to think he had gone a step too far in exposing him to the perils of the Prior's Gallery. The act, it was true, was one of Frank's own choice; but then his conscience whispered, and he could not deny her accusation, that, if he had not played the part of tempter to the enterprise, it had not been undertaken.

"The remarks, too, of those about him by no means tended to his comfort; all agreed there was something supernatural in the sudden violence of the storm, so much beyond the recollection of the oldest man present; and, if so, to whom could it refer, if not to the unlucky Frank, who was, in all human probability, suffering the pains and penalties of his rashness—not to give it a harsher name—in venturing upon a room which the dead had thought fit to appropriate to their own especial service? It must not, however, be imagined that mine host was thinking of any one but himself in his profound speculations on the subject; it was not the fear of what

might happen to Frank that troubled him, but doubt of peril to himself for having led him into the temptation.

“The morning came at last, and with it came sunshine, refreshing and gladdening the hearts of the watchers, who had probably seldom experienced keener pleasure than they did now, when, on the window-shutters being thrown open, the day burst in upon them in one broad blaze of light. It even inspired them with a certain degree of courage, not enough to carry them at once into the haunted chamber, but sufficient for them to form a sturdy resolution of going thither, if Frank did not shew himself in half an hour, and if—which was a principal condition in the compact—they continued, when the time came, in the same way of thinking.

“Their new-born zeal, however, was not destined to be put to a proof so trying; for they had scarcely commenced offensive operations against the well-loaded breakfast-table, when the object of it made his appearance, in high glee, though somewhat pale, it seemed, with the fears or fatigues of the night. In

his hand he bore a massive silver tankard, of antique fashion, the sight of which caused Mr. Barnaby's eyes to sparkle, and put the good company into singular admiration. Question now was huddled upon question with such rapid conveyance that it might have tasked the mouth of Gargantua to answer half of them.—

“ ‘How did he get the silver tankard?—had he seen the ghost?—what was it like?—what did it say?—was he not horribly frightened?—were there more than one?’ ”

“ ‘Softly, my masters!’ exclaimed Frank, raising his voice above this Babel-din of questions; ‘if you wish to learn what I have heard and seen——’ ”

“ ‘We do—we do!’ interrupted the guests with one voice.

“ ‘Why, then, spare this bibble-babble, and lend me your ears for a few moments.’ ”

“ In an instant every tongue was silent, though every mouth was wider open than ever, as if the tale was to be devoured by that organ rather than taken in at the ears.

“ ‘In the first place,’ said Frank, ‘I heard—’ ”

“ ‘Go on!’ exclaimed a score of voices ;
‘go on!’

“ ‘I heard—I heard—just what, I suppose,
you did—the wind and the rain, with several
smart claps of thunder.’

“ ‘Is that all?’ said the disappointed guests,
in chorus.

“ ‘No, it is not all,’ replied Frank ; ‘for I
saw a dozen ghosts, or more, and very good
fellows they are—to those who know how to
manage them. But there’s the rub ; if a man
wants the heart to treat them as he ought
to do, he’s sure to get the worst of the bargain ;
but only let him come up roundly to them,
and give them as good as they bring, and then
see if they don’t mend their manners! ‘Gad!
they grow as supple as an old glove, and as
ready to the hand. *Credite experto*—trust the
evidence of the silver tankard!’

“ ‘And did the ghosts give you that pre-
cious tankard?’ asked mine host.

“ ‘Ay, that did they,’ replied Frank, ‘and
full of wine, to boot—such as does not come
out of the cellars of the Red Lion. Only smell
to the cup ; you who have been lord of the

spigot for twenty years and upwards may guess what sort of liquor has been in it."

"Mine host sniffed at the goblet with the air of a connoisseur, and found the odour so much to his fancy that, holding the cup to his mouth, with the bottom of it turned to the ceiling, and his head thrown back, he endeavoured to extract still farther evidence from the few drops that might be lingering in it.

"Body o' me!" he exclaimed, 'this has a relish with it! I would I knew where to find a cellar of the like, or, at least, the butt from which this was drawn.'

" 'You may do that, and better, if you will,' replied Frank; 'you have only to pass the night, as I did, alone in the Prior's Gallery and take a stout heart with you; when the ghosts shew themselves, don't stand shilly-shally, but call and order lustily about you, like a rich traveller at a country tavern.'

" 'I have a pretty good notion of what that is,' said mine host; 'and, body o' me! if no more is needed to gain a butt of wine, I am the very man for them. I wish, though,

I could be quite certain there was no bones-breaking like to come of it.'

" 'Judge for yourself,' said Frank, cutting a caper like a ballet master. 'Does that, think you, look as if my limbs were other than whole?—or could a man with broken bones do this?—'

" And with one bound he cleared a pile of forms that were heaped up at the end of the room between him and the window.

" 'All very well,' replied mine host—'marvellous well in its way; but, somehow or another, I can't get it out of my head that you are a wag, Master Watson, and would like nothing better than putting me in the way of getting a bloody coxcomb.'

" 'That's all the fruit of a bad conscience, mine host; you meant mischief to me when you tempted me into the business, and now you think I want to return the compliment. But be of better faith, man; I can easily forgive your intention, when the result has been no worse than the gift of a silver tankard. Don't, however, let me persuade you into it against your own liking; it's nothing to me

whether you drink wine or water,—only I'll thank you for my wager, the twenty crowns that you staked last night against my guinea.'

"The landlord, who would willingly have forgotten the whole affair, made wry faces at this unpleasant jog to his memory. As, however, the rest of his guests united with one voice in maintaining the justice of the claim, he saw no way of escaping from it, and was preparing, with a very bad grace, to pay the money, when he was relieved from at least one half of its pain by Frank's protesting that, 'as the crowns were gained in the tavern, in the tavern they should be spent,' a declaration that was received with universal applause. The genial band of toppers agreed, one and all, that he was a hearty fellow, though he did carry a Londoner's tongue in his head, and swore loudly that they would spend another day and night there for the pleasure of his company.

"Such an agreeable declaration, which carried with it the promise of a golden harvest, at once reconciled mine host to Frank and his story; he no longer doubted that things were

in the Prior's Gallery as he had stated, and, with this conviction, he resolved to follow his advice, and try whether the ghosts would not be as liberal to himself as they had been to a stranger.—‘If,’ thought he, ‘they did so much for one they know nothing of, it would be hard, indeed, should they send me away sleeveless, who am their landlord, and, what’s more, don’t charge a sixpence for their lodging from year’s-end to year’s-end.’

“I don’t know how the guests contrived to pass the day at this lone inn upon a common, nor is it much to our purpose; perhaps they smoked away the time; or they might fish, for there were two or three large ponds on the heath, where, if they found nothing else, it was like enough there would be eels in plenty; or, it may be, they stole a sly shot at the venison in the forest, which I have before mentioned as skirting the heath to the left.

“Be this as it might, they did contrive to get through the twelve hours—in what way does not matter—and night found them, as before, seated round the punch-bowl. Mine host, who had been drawing from it frequent

reinforcements to his courage, was in high order by the time the clock struck eleven, which, by the advice of his counsellor, was the fittest season for his visit to the gallery. Accordingly, forth he set, escorted, as Frank had been on the preceding evening, but under more favourable auspices.

Though the night was dark, it was calm; there was no beating of the rain against the windows—no furious wind, to sound at one moment like the moans of the dying, and, at the next, like the trampling of feet through the long, crazy corridors—and, what was perhaps still more inspiring, every body around him was in better spirits. The adventure, too, had been tried—the danger proved to be imaginary—and, though it was scarcely possible for any of them to avoid a slight palpitation of the heart on entering the haunted chamber, yet still there was a wide difference between this feeling and the dread they had experienced on the first occasion.

Some of the boldest even ventured to jest upon the starch, staring portraits that frowned upon them from their oak panels; and amongst

these, not the least in daring was the lord of the Red Lion, who, elevated by the spirit of brandy above all sublunary considerations, gallantly snapped his fingers at the inanimate group, protesting that he should like nothing better than half an hour's gossip with the dead originals. It would seem that the portraits heard and accepted the challenge; for scarcely were the words out of his mouth than every eye amongst them was in motion, rolling backwards and forwards as if for a wager. This was quite enough for the guests; one and all rushed out of the gallery, leaving the landlord to settle with his ghostly tenants as best he might; and, in the hurry of their retreat flung to the door, which was fastened by a spring-lock, the key of which, unluckily for mine host, had been left by Frank on the outside.

"The landlord, thus abandoned to his fate, and the only outlet for escape cut off, placed himself with his back against a corner, the most remote from the point of danger, though, to do him justice, he was not half so much afraid as might have been expected. The punch had thrown a sort of mist over his

perceptive faculties, so dense that he could hardly be said to see the peril with any distinctness, and, as he grew more familiar with this battery of rolling eyes—for they did not cease their motion for a single instant—the sight struck him as having something so exceedingly ludicrous in it that he burst into a roar of laughter.

“This, however, did not seem to be taken in good part by the gentlemen on the wall, who might probably belong to the sect of the crying philosopher. First they stretched out the right hand,—then the left;—then one leg,—then the other;—and, lastly, the whole body became animated, when each stalked from his panel with as much uniformity of motion as if they had been so many soldiers, marching, and then halting at the word of command.

“This, which was carrying the joke somewhat beyond mine host’s idea of the thing, made him serious enough; but he recollected the good wine and the silver tankard, and kept up a stout heart, with a prudent resolution, however, not to stir or speak till he saw what

turn affairs were like to take. Nor was he long kept in doubt. A grim-looking figure, that, from the pre-eminent antiquity of his dress, might be presumed to be the founder of the family, stalked solemnly forward from the well-kept line, and, making his way directly for the west end of the room, without taking the slightest notice of the intruder, knocked thrice, at measured intervals, on the back of the fire-place.

“ ‘What can this mean?’ said mine host to himself. ‘Surely he has got no acquaintances up the chimney, that he is inviting after this odd fashion to come and sup with him! And yet, body o’ me! I scent, as prime a bit of venison as ever smoked on the table of the the Red Lion.’

“This conjecture, if not quite right, was yet not altogether wrong. At the old gentleman’s summons, a whole posse of serving-men came pouring down the chimney, loaded with various dishes, that, to judge from the pleasant odour which steamed from them, could not choose be other than excellent. Like their masters, the servants were in the costume of all ages,

from the flat cap in the time of the bluff King Hal, to the gold-laced cocked-hat of a more modern period—as if each century, or rather each reign, had sent forth its representative to a general congress.

“They were preceded by a grave-looking man, who, from the chain about his neck and the white rod in his hand, was evidently the steward. This important personage stopped before his followers with the stately pace of a captain at the head of his company, and halting at the large table in the centre of the room, regulated every movement with his wand, without so much as uttering a syllable. A tap on the head from this emblem of office signified to the person, so touched, that he was to come forward with his dish; a second tap, on the table, indicated the place where it was to be deposited; a rap over the knuckles at once marked and rebuked the placing of any thing awry; and in this manner the table was speedily covered with a quiet dexterity that put the attentive landlord into no little admiration. Gladly, had that been possible, would he have hired one of these silent functionaries to assist

in waiting on the guests of the Red Lion, and, though not prone to rash bargains, would have held himself a gainer in giving him a double luck-penny; but, since that might not be, he contented himself with wondering at their proceedings.

“Whilst the supper was being laid, the supernatural guests, for whose behoof it was intended, maintained their posts in strict silence nor did any one break out from the line till the steward gave notice by a profound bow that his preparations were completed. Then the mail-clad patriarch advanced, with the heavy tread of Don Juan’s statue of stone, to the half-clad maiden of King Charles’s time, whose uncovered neck, beyond what modern decency allows, bore ample testimony to the flesh-colour of Sir Peter Lely; the velvet hose and slashed coat of a still later day, in like manner, offered his well gloved hand to the flounced and furbelowed dowager of at least a century before; and, all being paired after this anomalous fashion, in utter contradiction to the established maxim of ‘like will to like,’ the gentlemen handed the ladies to their seats,

and, at a signal from the steward, the dishes were simultaneously uncovered.

“Mine host, who, in his time, had superintended the cooking and eating of many a good meal, though not perhaps within the walls of the Red Lion, was forced to confess to himself that he had never seen any thing at all to be compared to this supper. All the perfumes of Arabia were nothing to the savoury steam of the good things that smoked before this strange company, of whom it was difficult to say whether they belonged to the living or the dead.

“The smell alone would have tickled the palled appetite of a sick man, and made him rise from his bed to eat, though he had been bedridden for six months before. And the wine, both in quantity and quality, was well worthy of the more substantial viands: there was Champagne, clearer and brighter than the crystal in which it sparkled; rich Burgundy, perfuming the whole room with a fragrance far surpassing the most delicate scent of roses—the choicest vintage of the Johannisberg, almost as old as the guests themselves—and,

what to our landlord was hardly less acceptable, so great was the abundance of silver that its weight would absolutely have broken down a degenerate modern table.

“ ‘Body o’ me!’ he exclaimed, half aloud, unable to contain his ecstasy—‘ I never dreamt your ghosts were such a set of jolly companions. I always understood they were cold, thin, vapoury fellows, smelling of nothing but earth or sulphur, and going about the house in their winding sheets to frighten honest fellows out of their wits, if they happen to have any. But these are another guess sort of folks; ‘Gad! they know as well as any body what belongs to good living. What a delicate savour that piece of venison has!—and that fricandeaux—veal, I fancy—and those partridges!—Ugh! ugh!—I am a rogue, if there’s any bearing it; I shall melt away at the mouth, like a piece of fat butter in the frying-pan—and then the wine!—Ugh! ugh!—enough to make a man forswear his father—and the silver goblets!—the least of them bigger than the pewter flagon I use to measure out to the exciseman, and be d——d to his greedy gullet.

But there is no standing this any longer; I'll have a drink of that same Burgundy, and a cut of the venison, let what will come of it.'

"Accordingly he quitted his safe post in the corner; but, not to venture too rashly on danger, from which, when once in it, he might find it difficult to get out again, he determined to reconnoitre his ground first, and marched slowly round the table, at the distance of a yard or two, peeping and prying for an opportunity of edging himself in between the chairs. The little notice that was taken of this movement gave him fresh courage, but still he held the more ancient part of the company in awe, and was unwilling, if he could avoid it, to come in contact with any of the gentlemen in armour.

"The guests in the more modern habits looked, he thought, infinitely less mischievous than their warlike progenitors, and, with some manœuvring, he contrived to squeeze his chair in between two of them, an ancient dame, with a good-humoured face, and a smart young coxcomb, who had nothing very terrible in his appearance. Still, not a word was said.

He half stretched out his hand to the venison, at the same time looking up into the face of his neighbour to the right, as much as to say, ‘Have I your leave?’—but the gentleman took no notice. He turned to the left with a more beseeching look than ever—it was all the same—‘Silence gives consent,’ thought he,—but no sooner did he attempt to act upon this maxim, and put his spoon into a rich stew before him, than he received a smart rap across the knuckles, that tingled again up to his very elbows, and, on turning round, who should be there but the sour-faced steward.

“‘You need not hit so hard,’ said mine host; ‘I can take a hint, without its being rapped into me after that fashion; and, since it seems the lady has a fancy to the stew, I’ll even content myself with a wing of that same partridge.’

“Accordingly, he plunged his fork into the bird; but, before he could use his knife, a second smart blow on the knuckles made him sensible that this also, in the language of the South Sea Islanders, was a *tabooed* article.

“ ‘What! mus’n’t I touch that, either?’ he exclaimed, in a doleful tone.—‘Well, if I may not eat, I suppose I may drink. You’ll hardly be such a churl as to deny an honest fellow a drop of wine when you have got such plenty of it?’

“But no sooner had he laid his hands on the silver tankard than the white rod was put into action a third time, and that more smartly than ever.

“ ‘Soul of man!’ cried mine host in extreme ire, and recollecting Frank’s advice, that he should give them as good as they brought—‘this is too bad, master steward. Do tell me at once what I may touch, and leave off rapping my knuckles at this confounded rate, unless you have a mind I should send one of the dishes at your head. May I have a spoonful of that?’—pointing to what seemed a matelot of eels. The steward raised his wand,—‘Well, then, a morsel of that venison?—nor that either? then I’ll be d—d if I stand on any ceremony with you for the matter. You are a niggardly old scoundrel, and your masters are not a whit better than yourself, eating and

drinking there as if for dear life, and never saying so much to a poor fellow as—‘ Dog, will you take a snack?’ ’

“ At this bold speech, the company looked as much astonished as a set of ghosts well could do. Every knife and fork was suddenly laid down, and every chair drawn partly back, to stare more freely at the audacious intruder who thus presumed to beard them in their own hall. But mine host, who imagined from their silence he had got the whip-hand of them, continued his speech in a yet bolder strain, little deeming there was to be any after-reckoning.

“ ‘ I see you understand me,’ he said, ‘ and I tell you again, you are a set of niggardly, ungrateful scoundrels. Body o’ me ! am I not your landlord ? Is not this house mine ?—that is, so long as I pay rent for it to your dog of an heir, who, by-the-by, has got plenty of your miserly blood in his veins ;—it would be long before he would spare me in a single sixpence when quarter-day comes round, let times go how they would. But that’s neither here nor there ;—I let you have the use of this room

without the charge of a farthing, and,—soul of man!—I'll go snacks in some of these good things, or out you bundle, bag and baggage. And if you won't go quietly, I'll fetch a parson, who shall ferret you out of the old hall as easily as my dog, Towser, would hunt me out a family of rats.'

"It may be presumed the poor ghosts were put to a nonplus by the very excess of their astonishment, or they never could have heard this unwelcome harangue to the end. As it was, Mr. Barnaby had his full swing, when the steward rewarded his eloquence with so sound a knock on the mazard that he measured his full-length on the floor, and in his turn began to feel the surprise he had inspired. But he had little time given him to reflect on this or any thing else; one and all fell upon him as he lay there defenceless, the knights drubbing him with their gauntleted fists, the more delicate coxcombs kicking him with their long-pointed shoes, and the females of the party scratching, pinching, and biting, with a fury that, however ludicrous it might have been to a looker-on, was, Heaven knows,

a very serious matter to the unlucky devil suffering under the infliction.

“It was in vain that, one moment he consigned them all to a certain hot place, and the next roared out for mercy with the voice of a baited bull : they laughed at the one—probably as being a matter already settled, and not to be made worse by his wishes ; and they only beat him so much the more furiously for the other. To just as little purpose was it that he kicked and struggled to get out of their merciless grasp ; they had not only the advantage of numbers on their side, but were individually the strongest, so that there was every prospect of his being beaten to a mummy, when his cries summoned Frank to his assistance, the only one of the party below who would venture again into the gallery.

“No sooner did the pugnacious ghosts hear the sounds of steps in the corridor, than they all fled, helter-skelter, the servants scrambling up the chimney with the fragments of the supper, while their masters sneaked back again to their respective panels, and looked as staid and demure as if they had never

moved from the wall where the painter first placed them.

“ ‘Curse ye all!’ exclaimed the infuriated host; ‘who, to look at you, hanging there with your sober, hypocritical faces, would fancy you could play a fellow such cantrips? But, as I live by bread, I’ll sort you for it; you shall be quiet enough for the time to come.’

“ ‘And forthwith he snatched up a bar from the fire-place, and proceeded to assault the unlucky portraits with as much desperate determination as whilome Don Quixote evinced in his celebrated attack upon the windmills. Panel after panel cracked and splintered under the weight of his blows; here a face was split asunder,—there a nose was demolished;—this lost a leg,—the other an arm;—and the work was still going on merrily when Frank made his appearance.

“ ‘What, in the fiend’s name are you about?’ he exclaimed, snatching the iron from the breathless landlord;—‘are you mad?’

“ ‘Yes, I am mad, Master Watson!’ replied mine host; ‘I have a right to be mad, after such a drubbing as they have given me.’

“ ‘Alack-a-day, poor man!’ said Frank—
‘and so he has been beaten? But who is it
that has done this naughty deed?’

“ ‘Why, who but the ghosts, and be d—d
to them?’

“ ‘You have seen them, then?’ said Frank.

“ ‘Seen them!’ echoed the landlord; ‘the
foul fiend fly away with the disembodied vil-
lains!—if, indeed, he has not got his share of
them already; it’s seldom he gives long credit
where so much is owing—seen them, say
you? why, man, I have felt them, and know
the weight of their fists to a grain avoirdupois.
But it’s all your fault—all your fault; I did
just as you told me, and see what has come
of it! Body o’ me! no fish-wife ever wagged
her tongue to a better tune than I did; and
only look at my arms, Master Watson!—look
at my poor back, Master Watson! I called
them knaves, and fools, and niggardly rascals,
and fifty other hard names—any one of which,
if words had any weight, was enough to break
the back of a horse.’

“ ‘And did you tell them all this in plain
English?’ asked Frank.

“ ‘Why, in what language do you think I told it?—or what is that to the matter?’ ”

“ ‘Every thing,’ said Frank; ‘in that lies the secret.’ ”

“ ‘Zounds! man, I am not one of your college coxcombs, who carry half-a-dozen tongues between one pair of jaws. But that’s of little consequence; they understood me well enough.’ ”

“ ‘No doubt of it.’ ”

“ ‘No doubt, you say? Why the devil, then, did you lead me into this pretty business?’ ”

“ ‘Good, mine host!’ replied Frank, gravely—‘who would have looked for this from so discreet a man as you are?—a man who has cut his eye-teeth—who can give a quart of wine in a pint measure, and brew strong ale without the help of barley. Go to! I am ashamed of you—not to have known that you should tell truth in Latin!’ ”

“ ‘In Latin!’ exclaimed the landlord. ”

“ ‘Why, who but the veriest dolt would think of abusing a man to his face, and he the stronger? Ever, while you live, if you wish to curry favour with a man, tell truth in Latin.’ ”

"It was a queer saying, that of Short Watson's—wasn't it?" said Dick, as he finished his tale.

"And did he tell it to you in Latin?" said I.

"Not a bit of it," replied Richard; "if he had, you'd have heard little of it from me, I fancy."

"Humph!" said I.—"But here we are at Pembroke; so there's a crown for your maxim; and, when I say any thing of Hell-fire Dick, I'll take especial care it shall not be in English."

LUCY ELLIS.

RICHARD CLIFTON was one of those wild, yet commanding, spirits, that are great in good or evil, according to the more or less favourable circumstances in which they may happen to be placed. His earliest years had been devoted to the navy, and in this service, by his own unassisted merits, he had risen to the rank of a first lieutenant, when a blow given by him to his superior officer thrust him on the world a pennyless outcast. The same energies, which had before made him the best of seamen, now rendered him the worst of citizens, for *power* is like the fiend that, once evoked, must have something to employ it, or it falls upon its master.

There was a blight on his fame and on his hopes, yet still there was one chance for him; he had long been attached to Lucy Ellis, who on her side most truly loved her sailor in spite of all his faults, real or supposed—and the one list was equal to the other, for calumny, like the raven, is fond of preying on the weak and wounded. Had the father of the maiden consented to their union, it is most probable that the life of Richard would still have proved honourable to himself, and useful to his country; but old Ellis was one of those heartless, selfish beings, who love their children only as they minister to their own comfort or gratification; he wished to see his daughter married to a rich man, not as the possession of wealth might make her lot the happier, but because a rich son-in-law added to his own importance.

Such a proposal therefore excited his warmest indignation; it was a cutting-up of all his prospects—of the hopes he had been toiling for many years to realize; she would be a beggar, an outcast; the alliance would be infamy. In all this, however, there was much less regard

shewn for his child than for himself; or rather for his own peculiar fancies; and Lucy felt there was.

This was the corner-stone of the subsequent evils; the harshness of her father made her more open to the false flatteries of her lover, though, at the same time, she was not altogether ignorant of her own weakness; in the hour of temptation she flung herself on the honour of the man she adored; she owned her inability to resist him, in all the fervour of a real passion, and urged that very passion as a plea for his forbearance. With many this plea had been effectual, but not with men like Richard Clifton, who have no settled rule of conduct, and are either bad or good from the impulse only of the moment. The consequence was the seduction of the too-confiding Lucy; and in a few months afterwards her lover joined a band of smugglers, and was either killed, or drowned, or had fled the country, for each of these reports had its particular abettors.

In the meantime the dishonour of Lucy became too gross for longer concealment. On the discovery of her situation, the heartless

merchant at once turned her out of doors, as the destroyer of all his dearest expectations, and bade her starve, or live as she could best settle the matter with the world ; nor could any after argument of his friends produce the least relaxation in his purpose ; he was deaf to all remonstrance, whether on the score of justice or humanity. But the wrath of heaven, which had first smitten the guilty child, was not slow in punishing the relentless parent, who had arrogated to himself the office of vengeance, and executed it with more of passion than of equity.

In his eagerness to amass a fortune, the merchant overstepped the bounds of prudent speculation. The first great loss stimulated him to a second adventure for its retrieval ; and, that miscarrying, in turn brought with it a farther hazard, to fail like those before it, 'till the proud and wealthy Ellis found himself a destitute bankrupt, pursued and crushed by the vindictive spirit of disappointed creditors, who pleaded his cruelty in excuse for theirs. " You shewed no mercy to your own child, how then can you expect it from me, a stranger ? "

was the answer of one to whom he was deeply indebted, and who had formerly been a fruitless intercessor for poor Lucy. Some, too, were actuated by less disinterested motives, and were glad to shelter their hatred of the father under the show of compassion for the child. But the result was the same to Ellis; he was a ruined man; his ostentatious charities, which had been so much praised in the days of his prosperity, were now viewed in their true light; they had not procured a single friend to assist him in the hour of distress.

So complete had been the failure, and so rigid his creditors, that a few weeks found the man, whose word had once been good for thousands, possessed of a few pounds only. In this dilemma he quitted his native town, which for the last month he had inhabited from mere pride, and, after a long course of suffering, became the guardian of a light-house on one of the wildest parts of the English coast. A very short residence in this sad abode made him a weaker, though not a better, man; he grew, not less selfish, but more timid, more impressed with the actual and near presence of a

Creator, and he began to feel that there was not only an after, but a present, vengeance. Nor is this to be wondered at; loneliness brings the mind more immediately in contact with the works of Omnipotence, and, from them, with Omnipotence itself. No man of any imagination was ever an Atheist in solitude, and though, in the case of old Ellis, religion was only the worship of fear, still it was better than no faith at all; it taught him a little more lenity to the faults of others.

Nearly two years had thus passed, when one September's evening a poor maniac in squalid weeds, and with a face gaunt from long misery, came to his door, begging for a morsel of bread and a cup of water—it was his child!—The recognition was quick and mutual, but with very opposite feelings. Sorrow, and pain, and remorse, suddenly threw a dark cloud over the old man's face, while the maniac's eye was lit up with an expression of rage and triumph that was truly fiend-like, as she screamed out, "Ho! ho! ho! have I found you at last? take back your curse, old man; I have borne it long enough, and a sad load and a weary one it has

been to me ; but take it back ; it curdled the milk of my bosom to poison, and my poor babe sucked and died. But take it back, and look that it does not sink you into the depths of hell ! Many a time it has lain heavy on me, and I felt myself sinking—sinking—sinking—like one that struggled for life in the flood of waters ; but then my sweet babe would come, his cherub-face all bright with glory, just like those clouds where the sun is setting,—and his little hand was stronger than my strength, for it would draw me back again when I was up to my breast in fire. But you have no child to save you ; therefore look that your heart be strong ; you had best——no child—no child, old man, for I deny you—I cast you off ; go, leave this earth ; it is mine ; go ! do you hear ? you are the only blot upon the face of this bright and beautiful world, and I'll none of you. Go!—you'll ask whither ? but that's your concern ; there's a large realm above, and a larger one below, and if they refuse you in the one it will only be a better recommendation to the other."

She might still have gone on thus, for old

Ellis was too much shocked to interrupt her, but the wild mood had exhausted itself; her eye was caught by the sun, resting with his broad, red disk on the ocean, and her thoughts reverted to the hunger-pains which incessantly gnawed her, though they had been unfelt, or, at least, unnoticed, during the violence of her passion. On a sudden she exclaimed, "I wish the sun would set that we might go to supper." Roused by this appeal, the old man took her by the hand and would have gently forced her into the light-house, but it was all to no purpose; this singular idea had got possession of her, though it is not easy to say from what cause, and she positively refused to move a step till the sun was below the water. "He has a long way yet to go," she said; and, taking up a handful of dust, she scattered it slowly in the air towards the West, at the same time muttering, or rather chaunting, "Speed! speed! speed!" 'till, by degrees, her memory pieced out the words of a familiar song, which she poured forth in the wild manner so peculiar to insanity:—

"Speed, sun, speed through the ocean wave,
Where the mermaid sings in her coral cave, [
Where on sands of gold the pearl is white,
And each glance of thine eye wakes something bright ;
Where thy fairest beams upon diamonds play,
That shine with a fairer light than they.

Speed, sun, speed, for from out the wave
A voice invites to the mermaid's cave,
Where the waters are rolling o'er her head,
Like the rainbow's arch o'er the evening spread ;
And each drop, which falls from that brilliant bow,
Turns to a gem of the same below."

The sun had sunk below the horizon as the last words died on the maniac's lips, and, Ellis having lit the beacon, they sat down to their humble supper. Both for a time were silent, the daughter from the caprice of insanity, the father because he was stunned and stupified by her appearance, coupled, as it was, by past recollections. Remorse was busy with him, though it was remorse without repentance; and, if he wished the past recalled, it was more with reference to his own pain than to the sufferings of his daughter. Lucy, however, was in a state that made all these things a matter of indifference to her; and as the evening

darkened, her madness took a wilder turn.

“Do you hear, old man? ho! ho! ho! the Spirit of the Wind is abroad. Do you hear what a coil he keeps up yonder, bawling into the ear of old Ocean and calling on him to wake? Do you see the billows too? how lazily they lift up their heads, as if unwilling to leave their slumber! how they toss and tumble, and roar and groan!—but it’s all to no purpose; you’ll sing a wilder tune yet, my merry boys; and I’ll sing with you, and the curlew shall whistle, and the rain shall patter, and the thunder shall rumble, and we’ll have a brave music to your dancing, such as the foot of king never danced to.”

The face of the old man darkened at this raving; it was making his misery more intolerable, and, if remorse had brought any transient feeling of pity into his heart, it was quite extinguished when he found that his daughter’s presence would be a constant source of torment to him. He looked at her with a countenance of wrath, but in the next moment something seemed to stifle the expression of his anger before he had time to give it vent, and he re-

sumed his meal in sullen silence. The change did not escape Lucy; she fixed her elbows on the table, and, resting her head on her hands, gazed on him for several minutes without moving a muscle, to the sore annoyance of the old man, whose blood was already in a ferment; he swallowed the thin sour beer at long draughts, clutched the handle of his knife more firmly, and tried to force his attention from her. But all to no purpose. Her protracted gaze became, at last, unendurable, and he exclaimed, half rising from his seat, "What in the devil's name do you stare at me for? can you find nothing else for your eyes but my face?"

"I was counting how long you had to live," said the maniac calmly; "you have only a few hours,—I read it in the lines of your brow—only a few hours, and then I shall be the lady of this castle, and Richard will come home to me and bring our little Lucy with him, and we shall be so happy!—oh, so happy!"

This was too much for the patience of Ellis; he started up from his seat, dashing away his plate with a curse on the poor maniac and the mother who had borne her.

"Woman! — witch! — devil! — you were brought into this world for no purpose but to be my torturer. But I'll not bear it many hours longer; either you or I, and I don't much care which."

He raised his hand to strike, perhaps to kill, her, when a deep flash of lightning blazed between them, and the old tower rocked in the wind as if it were going to tumble about their ears. So tremendous, indeed, was this burst of the storm that a large mass of overhanging cliff, which the water had been for years undermining, was hurled down with a horrible crash, and the spray of its fall came beating against the highest windows of the light-house.

"Did you see him?" shouted Lucy.

"See whom?" stammered Ellis, pale and motionless from terror, though without knowing any distinct cause for his apprehension.

"Did you hear him?" echoed the maniac.

"Hear whom?" replied the father in a voice that was scarcely audible.

"So, you neither saw nor heard him?"

"Whom? whom?" exclaimed Ellis, now almost frantic with the impatience of fear.

“The Devil—the arch-fiend—the fisherman of souls. He has you, father; he has marked you with his mark, and signed you with his sign. His broad lightning-wings covered you as he spoke upon your head the baptism of hell;—

One drop of thy blood where the stream is red ;
One lock of the hair from thy purchased head ;
One touch of baptizing flame to plough
The mark of your Christ from out your brow ;
Ho ! ho ! how the cold and watery sign
Hisses and dries 'neath this touch of mine !
While I'm Lord of the flame, be the waters thine.

The hair on Ellis' head was actually singed by the lightning; his brow, too, was slightly scathed; and, whether it was the electric shock or the mere force of imagination, a single drop of blood did indeed fall from his dilated nostrils. But it is impossible to calculate the power of fancy on such occasions; it is neither to be estimated, nor controuled by reason. The old man was frantic with terror, and dashed out of the light-house, as if impelled by some external agency, while the maniac quietly installed herself in a large oak chair before the window, with all the pride of a queen just

restored to her lawful throne by the expulsion of its usurper.

"So, so ; the old man is gone," she exclaimed, "and I am his heir,—his rightful heir ; this house is mine, and all that is in it ; I am lord of the castle now.* But what do you here?"—it was a large Newfoundland dog that had caught her eye as he lay basking before the fire—"what do you here, I say?—your name and calling—quick!—why, how now! can't you speak?—and with that monstrous tongue too licking your paws!—Sirrah, sirrah, I shall find a way to make you answer."

The dog, for a moment, looked her in the face, wagging his tail in token of recognition, but he did not choose to leave his warm place before the fire, and quietly resumed his occupation of licking his paws. Highly incensed at this supposed obstinacy, the maniac started from her seat and hurled a wooden trencher at his head, upon which the animal, setting up a long piteous howl, slunk back into the farthest corner of the room. But even this timely retreat would not have saved him from her wrath, had not her attention been suddenly

drawn away by the appearance of a small brig, that was visible in the flashes of lightning, as it tossed and pitched, and struggled with the waters, like some strong swimmer in the agony of drowning.

“He comes!” she cried—“he comes! my own dear Richard!—missed and mourned for many a long weary day, and come at last!”—the poor thing knew not how truly she was speaking—“Blow, blow, my gentle wind—blow him to me,—my bridegroom, my husband. Oh, how slowly his bark moves towards the shore! ’tis my cruel father holds it back.”

But in truth the vessel was driving too fast upon the land, in spite of all the seamen’s efforts to keep her off, for they had yet a reef of rocks to weather, which stretched out from the shore, something less than a quarter of a mile, and on which the surf was beating most tremendously. ’Till these were past, the usual dangers of a lee-shore were doubled on them. At this critical juncture the wind veered a point in their favour; the beacon too from the light-house marked out to the experienced sailors the extent of their peril, as was evident

by their efforts to keep out to sea, and their safety became almost certain. But this delay was sorely vexatious to the impatient spirit of poor Lucy—"Slow! slow!" she exclaimed, "but 'tis your fault, father; you were always cruel to your daughter; first you took my Richard from me; then, my child; then my reason, and I have been looking for it over many a weary mile of land, and never yet could find it. Some told me it was buried with my babe—it may be so, for the cold hard stone lay upon her grave, and I had no strength to move it and see what lay beneath. But I'll be revenged. I'll quench the fire on your hearth and the light on your tower."

No sooner had this frantic notion got possession of her brain than she hastened to put it into execution by cutting the rope that governed the windlass. In an instant the lamp came down and was dashed to shivers, leaving the whole coast in utter darkness, and the little brig in imminent peril of shipwreck. At first she was startled at her own act; something like a consciousness of her mischief shot across her brain, but the feeling

was only transient, and she resumed her lookout for the vessel, that for a time was invisible to her even in the deepest flashes of the lightning. Still she maintained her watch at the window, her eyes intently fixed on the black waste of waters. They were agitated more furiously than ever, and rolled mountain-like against the cliffs, as if contending with them for the empire of the land. At last she caught a glimpse of the vessel, nailed as it were to a rock, but then again it passed away even before the lightning that had shown it. Still she watched.

Nearly half an hour had thus elapsed when she was roused from this dreamy state by the sound of voices in the room below. A large crevice in the broken floor allowed her to see old Ellis in high altercation with three wild-looking strangers in the dress of seamen; two she could easily distinguish, but the third, who stood opposite to her father, and who was by far the most violent, was so placed that she could only see his back; he was evidently the leader of the party by his vehemence in the dispute about the beacon, to the absence of

which, and not without cause, he attributed the loss of his vessel and her cargo.

"So, you old scoundrel!" he exclaimed; "after having brought my ship home, in spite of wind and waters, I am to founder in sight of land because you are too lazy a lubber to do your duty! Why were you not aloft in the light-house looking after your beacon?"

"Richard Clifton!" cried the old man, who had by this time recognized his voice.

"And who told you I was Richard Clifton, you villainous old wrecker? What!—eh!—yes, it is old Ellis!—huzza, my boys; we have him at last; there is but another of his breed, and that's the Devil. I tell you what, my old one; you had better have sate on a barrel of gunpowder, with a lighted fusee at your tail, than have crossed my path."

"Why, what will you do?"

"Do!—it was you, who set on my creditors to hound me like a pirate; it was you that denied me Lucy; you that drove me to be a villain; and, now that the wind had set fair, and my uncle, the planter, had left me his money, and I was coming home with a wet

sail, it was you, you old wrecker, that dowsed the beacon, and—”

“I did no such thing,” interrupted Ellis.

“You lie; you did; you wanted to have the picking of my ship’s bones, but if you get more than enough timber to make your coffin, may I sup brimstone with the Devil till they pipe all hands for the day of judgment.”

And with this he snatched up an axe and split the old man’s skull without allowing him a pause for answer. So effectual was the blow that the victim instantly rolled at his feet, a lifeless corpse; but the passion of vengeance was over with its gratification; Clifton, though a daring, and, in some sense of the word, a hard-hearted man, was not totally devoid of feeling, and he would willingly have struck off a dozen years from his own life for the power of recalling the last few minutes. He gazed on the work of his own hands with a sensation of horror, that had hitherto been a stranger to him, when a loud scream from the room above, by diverting his attention gave relief to the poignancy of his feelings. The shriek was repeated—every hand was instinct-

ively placed on its cutlass—a third time, and the fall of a heavy body was heard over their heads. To catch up a brand from the fire and rush to side of the unfortunate maniac was but the work of an instant, and a very little more time was requisite to show him his own Lucy in the wretched being, that on her recovery to life lay shivering and moaning in hopeless madness. All his efforts to make himself known to her were without avail; she saw in him only the murderer of her father, and, as her mood changed, she either replied to him with curses, or mocked him with idiot malignity, that was even more dreadful than her execrations.

“I see it now,” said Clifton in the agony of his heart; “I seduced your innocence,—drove you to madness—and now that madness is made the instrument of vengeance; it wrecks my wealth, makes me a murderer, and consigns me to the gallows—the gallows?—mess-mates, this is no place for me; I must be off before any one stumbles on the job below. But whither?—no matter; I must be off, or I shall be trapped, and I have no mind to die upon a gallows, if it were only for the name of Clifton.”

But it was too late ; five minutes before, and escape was not only possible, but without difficulty ; now there was not the slightest chance either for cunning or desperation ; a party of king's seamen, who were on the preventive service, had observed the sudden disappearance of the beacon, and, supposing it was by some fault of the keeper, had come to warn him of his imagined negligence. On entering the light-house, the first thing [they saw was the body of the murdered Ellis, as he lay on the floor, bathed in blood, and his head cleft asunder. This naturally led to the seizure of Clifton and his party, when the latter, in their anxiety to escape from any share in the probable consequences, did not hesitate to bear witness against their captain. Such evidence was of course fatal ; a very few days sufficed to settle the whole affair, for it had happened a short time only before the assizes, so that the trial followed close upon the heels of the murder. Richard Clifton was condemned to death, and ordered for execution on the light-house rock.

It was the night previous to the fatal day—

one of those calm, autumnal nights when the leaf drops noiseless from the tree as if it were a shadow. A thin, clear, white fog mantled the earth, through which the moon seemed floating like a spirit, so little had it dimmed her brightness, and, as the prisoner lay in his dungeon, he could see the carpenters at work on his scaffold. He even heard the coarse jokes of the workmen, their tauntings of each other, and their calculations as to the probable pain of hanging, mixed now and then with a word of self-congratulation that they were not, as they expressed it, in the shoes of the prisoner. Not a syllable escaped him.

“A few more screws in the upright,” said the master-carpenter, “or our work may chance to give way, and disappoint the poor fellow.”

“If it does, I’ll give you leave to hang me,” said one of his assistants. “But suppose we try it first on Sim, here; if it bears his fat sides, it will bear any thing.”

“You had better try it on yourself,” replied the object of this taunt; “your throat was made for a hempen neck-cloth, and as well one day as another.”

"With all my heart," said the first speaker, and, dextrously flinging a rope over the top-beam, he sprang up so as to catch a grasp of it as high as possible, and swung himself from the scaffold, with his head turned to one shoulder, and his feet flourishing in air, in imitation of one just executed.

The heart of Richard was sick within him at this brutal jest, but, when the first pain of the shock was over, it left behind a kind and gentle effect; the overwrought mind sank into a slumber, and fortunately for him the indolence, or the drowsiness, of the jailor let him remain undisturbed by the usual hourly visitations. His dreams, too, were happier than the waking reality; to his sleep he was no longer in a dungeon, but stood proudly at the helm of his little brig, with every sail set to the wind, and lying gunnel to amidst the dark, green waves that splashed half way up her mast. There was reason, however, for this perilous speed; Lucy was traversing the shore on her way to church with a bridegroom forced upon her by old Ellis, who, sleeping or waking, seemed to be ever in the way of Richard. The

first of the party had already crossed the church-yard stile, while there was still a space of three miles, at least, lying between it and his vessel. Reckless of the consequences, he shouted to his men, "Out with every reef in her mainsail, my lads; sink or swim, 'tis no matter."

This was no sooner said than done, and the mast began to groan and quiver, while the water rose half over the leeward side of the deck; but the purpose was answered; with this fresh stimulus the vessel flew like a bird along the waters, and, just as the priest was challenging the bye-standers to produce any impediment to the union, he was at the altar, and almost breathlessly exclaimed — "I do; I, the bride's husband—mine, by an oath; mine, by this token!" and he lifted up their infant, that now, by another flight of fancy, lay cradled in his arms.

"Mine! mine!" seemed Lucy to reply.

"Mine! mine!" echoed a thousand voices from below, when the organ began to send forth its deepest sounds, and the stones to be heaved up from the vaults, and all those who had been buried for centuries arose from

their long sleep, not as shrouded skeletons, but as things of life, each in the costume of his own time. It was, in fact, the masquerade of ages; the thin, tight-laced beau of modern ages gave his hand to the furbelowed antique, with hoop of monstrous dimensions and a turret of caps on her head; the gauntleted warrior stretched out his arm of brass to the half-clad fair one, who returned his formal courtesy with the slight nod of a modern fashionable; lawyers, priests, soldiers, statesmen, women and children, in grotesque assemblage ranged along each side of the chancel. And now the waltz began—at first slow—then quicker—quicker—and the organ, too, increasing its speed—till at last it seemed the jubilee of madness.

But the vision soon melted away into another shape, more pleasing and less fantastic than this dance of the living dead. The grey aisles of the church were succeeded by the humble mansion of his father, even to the minutest article that lived in his waking memory, and twenty years were struck off from the account of time; he was a boy again,

in holiday freedom from school, playing at the feet of his mother, and, by one of the strange incongruities so familiar to dreams, she wore the face and form of Lucy. If a state of sleep can be deemed life, this was with him the happiest moment of life; he hung on her lips, like a young bee on the rose, and the very air, she breathed, seemed a perfume. It was a full and perfect consciousness of bliss, that belongs only to the imagination, and can therefore be tasted by none but the sleeper or the maniac; a glimpse of reason would destroy it; like the figures of the phantasmagoria, it is visible only in the total absence of light.

Such a condition of mind and body, however, could not, and did not, last long, and with every minute his slumber lost something of its soundness. He began to be half-conscious that he was only in a dream, and in this middle state, between sleeping and waking, struggled hard to retain the illusion by giving himself up to it as much as possible. He had even partially succeeded, when a rude voice, in breaking up this slumber, awoke him to a full sense of his misery. It was the jailor with

the blacksmith, who came to knock off his fetters previous to his appearance on the scaffold. The transition was anguish unutterable. The mind, too, by this short respite from pain had acquired fresh capabilities of sufferance, and by the time he was led out from prison he was in a state of mental agony more severe than the worst inflictions of the hangman. He had seen many suffer the same form of death, but now that he was called upon to endure it in his own person it seemed as a thing beyond all possible calculation—as an event that had never happened till then.

He gazed on the crowd that were collected to witness his death, as he had often witnessed the death of others, and could hardly believe that he himself was the victim of the present hour; or if his eye by accident glanced on a face of more than usual hardness, he turned away instinctively in horror. It was even a relief to his sufferings to dwell on any countenance that expressed sympathy with his condition; there was a vague idea of safety connected with it, an indefinite feeling of support and friendship; and yet the same

man, who yielded to this weakness, would have faced a cannon without shrinking.

He was now within a few yards of the scaffold, when a young woman made her way to him in spite of all opposition, and flung herself, sobbing, on his neck. It was Lucy Ellis. The sheriff's people would fain have forced her from him, but at the earnest prayer of Richard the clergyman interposed, notwithstanding the irregularity of the proceeding, and obtained for her a momentary respite, which she was not slow to employ.

"Why is this?" she exclaimed; "I will not have it so. The old man was my father, and, if I forgive the deed, you surely may. What was he to any of you? by God's light, you make much more ado about the dead man than you ever did about the living one."

"We can delay no longer," said the sheriff, who little expected such an appeal.

"You can't!" exclaimed Lucy, "and who are you?" Then addressing herself to the clergyman, she added in a tone of peculiar bitterness, "Turn over your book, my bonny man, and let them know that they shall do no

murder ; and what do they call hanging a man on yonder cross-stick till he's black in the face?—is n't that murder, think ye?"

For the first time since his boyhood a tear stood in Richard's eye, but he did not utter a syllable. Lucy stretched out her hand towards him, like a mother questioning her child.

"Answer me, Richard, do you believe there is another world?"

"Most fervently," ejaculated the prisoner, and it was evident the reply was an involuntary one.

"Then give us both your blessing, reverend sir," said Lucy, casting herself on her knees before the clergyman.

The pale cheek of the venerable old man was suffused with a slight glow, and his hand trembled, as he laid it on the suppliant's head, saying, in a voice scarcely audible from emotion, "May God of his infinite mercy forgive the young man the wrong he has done to thee and thine, and take ye both unto himself in a world where there is neither sin nor suffering."

"Amen !" responded Lucy ; and the Amen

was solemnly echoed back by the whole assemblage.

She now rose from her knees, kissed her lover tenderly between the eyes, and, exclaiming "Farewell!" dashed him suddenly from the cliff. So unexpected was the action that no hand was quick enough to prevent it, and, before the waters had well closed over his body, she flung herself headlong after him. One cry of the falling suicide—one plash of the broken waters—and all was over!

RECOLLECTIONS
OF
A NIGHT OF FEVER.

It was the eleventh day of my fever. The medical attendants had again collected round my bed for a last struggle with the disease that was drying up my blood, and searing the very marrow of my bones. Unfortunately, in every sense of the word, for my present comfort, as for the chance of recovery, I had little faith in them, though, to judge from the result, my opinion had less of reason than of pre-

judice. But I could not help myself; I was far away from those in whom I should have put trust, in the Isle of Jersey, which, for any useful purpose, as regarded distance, might as well been the Isle of Madeira.

My physicians had deemed it proper to bring with them a third—an addition to their number that I felt at the time was ominous of nothing good. Still I had an instinctive dread of asking the one plain question, “Do you give me over?” This would have ended all suspense, but then it might have also ended all hope; and who would willingly put hope from him? I endeavoured to gather from their looks the opinion which I feared to ask for; but men of this description have either no feelings to conceal—long acquaintance with misery having rendered them perfectly callous—or, as in the better and rarer case, the strong sense of duty has taught them to subdue every appearance of emotion.

How eagerly did I watch their passing glances as they stood about me! and how yet more anxiously did I listen to their half-whispered consultation on their retiring to the

next room, to decide upon the awful question of life or death ; for to that I knew too well my case had come. I felt as the criminal must feel when the jury have left the box, carrying with them the power to save or destroy, and much more likely, from what has passed, to use that power fatally. Death, when it shall come, will never have half the bitterness of those few minutes of horrible suspense, when life, the dearest stake we can play for, is on the die, and hope is struggling, single-handed, against doubt, and fear, and reason.

I listened till I heard, or seemed to hear, the throbbings of my own heart ; but I could catch nothing beyond a few broken sentences, though the folding-doors that divided the two rooms were left ajar ; and the words, heard thus imperfectly, only added to my apprehensions. —“I think not,” said the new-comer. What was it he did not think ?—that I should live, or that I should die ?—“To-morrow,” said the same voice.—“Ay, to-morrow !” thought I, “to-morrow I shall be cold and senseless ; she who now drops the tears of burning agony over my death-bed—who would give her own

life, were that possible, to prolong mine but a few hours—even she will shrink in horror from me.” I could almost fancy it was written on yonder wall that it shall be thus. Fancy?—why, it is there, written by the same hand that wrote the awful “Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin,” on the walls of the banquet-room of Belshazzar.

Will it be believed? I was yet in the full possession of my senses when this wild notion seized me; or at least I had a perfect consciousness of my own identity. The setting sun shone broadly and strongly through the red curtains that had been drawn to exclude the light, and fell upon the walls opposite to me in crimson lines, that irresistibly recalled to my overheated brain the letters of fire that brought dismay and death to the heart of the Babylonian king. But, I repeat it, I was still in my perfect senses; I knew that I was at St. Heliers, in the Isle of Jersey; I could distinguish all around me; I could count the rapid beatings of my pulse; I knew too, that the rushing sound below my window was the bursting of the waves upon the beach; and could even argue with myself on all I saw and

felt. If that were not real, which my eyes presented as such, what was real? The moon, the sun itself, existed to me but as I saw them; and, if sight be the evidence of reality in one case, why not in another? This, therefore, was no more than the prologue to delirium; the thing itself was yet to come.

The physicians had long since gone. The evening declined rapidly, and in those few hours, which may be said to linger between light and darkness, I was in a state of comparative quiet. But when night came on—eyeless, voiceless, heavy night!—oh, how inexpressibly wretched then is the chamber of sickness!—darkness made visible by the dim, dull taper, that only serves to light our terrors;—silence so deep that the low ticking of the clock falls on the ear like rain-drops on stone, fretting and consuming;—the array of phials, full and empty;—the clothes long since disused, and now hanging on the frame, from which it is probable the same hand will never again remove them;—the old, hard-featured nurse, whose presence cannot for a moment be separated from the idea of disease and suffering;—

the light, ominous click of the death-watch, a fable which health with reason laughs at, but which sickness believes, and trembles while it believes:—all these work upon the mind, and the mind again upon the body, till the brain is excited to delirium. And to that state I was fast tending; I felt it myself, and even tried by reasoning to keep down my rising fancies. But it was all to no purpose; strange shapes began to float about me, while my hands and feet burnt like iron thrice heated in the furnace, and my own touch scorched my own flesh. Those fantastic shadows, too, flung from the various pieces of furniture upon the wall!—how they mocked me by their flitting forms, as the rushlight flickered to and fro under the air!

“Will it never again be morning? Oh, if this long, dreary night would only pass! if I could but again see the light of day!—Hark! the clock strikes; another hour is gone!”

I had spoken this aloud; and the nurse, with that gratuitous spirit of information which infects the old and heartless when the thing to be communicated may give pain, lost no time

in setting me right: it was the passing bell I had heard. And what was that to me more than any one beside? I was not the nearer death because another had just deceased. Had I been capable of reason, there was nothing in this for terror; but, in such cases, we do not reason—we feel.

“Only the passing bell!” I said, repeating her words—“only the bell that calls the worm into a new feast! Oh, for morning—morning!—when will it be morning?—I say, what is the hour?”

“Ten, Sir; it has just struck. But you had better try to sleep.”

“No more than ten! I thought it had been three at least.—Sleep, you say? ay, but how can I, when that fellow grins at me so horribly, and the room goes round, and the lights flicker? But you are right; I will go to sleep—to sleep—to sleep!”

I buried my head in the clothes, to shut out the images that harassed me, and for a time slept, or seemed to sleep. It was, however, only for a short time—perhaps an hour—perhaps a few minutes—I know not; but

time grows longer as we approach the grave, as the shadows increase in the decline of day.

The sound of trumpets startled me from my broken slumber. I was in Rome, a Roman amongst Romans, with no other consciousness of individual being than what belonged to that moment; yet memory and fancy had strangely wrought together, confounding men and things, times and places. War had fixed his throne in the capitol, and bound his brow with the crown of victory. Men neither thought nor spoke of any thing but battle and triumph; they were the only measure of glory—the sole object for which we lived. The wealth of nations was constantly pouring through the streets, either as tribute or as plunder, to satisfy a spirit that was insatiable, and to swell a pride that was already towering to the clouds. What were kings, rich with barbaric gold and pearl, to the meanest of us, though our rags were an offence to earth and heaven?—to us, the citizens of eternal Rome? *Our* eagles waved over them, to defend or to devour; *our* senate gave them laws, either as slaves or allies. And who lent wings to those eagles, or gave

voice to that senate, but ourselves—the children of eternal Rome? It was told us by our tribunes; it was repeated by our consuls; it was engraved upon our banners, that spoke neither of tribunes nor of consuls, but of the senate and the Roman people; while the tremendous Cabala, the S. P. Q. R., spread terror amongst the remotest nations of the world. We might want for bread, but we never wanted for that food which pampers the spirit, and elevates poor mortality above the level of earth. Slaves in gold and purple might flatter kings, but our flatterers were the conquerors of kings; they were heroes and demigods, the bravest, the wisest, and the noblest of the earth, and yet were fain to put on the garments of humility, shewing their scars and counting their deserts to win our favour. Wherever our eyes turned they were saluted with the monuments of our glory—the records of a conquered world.

There was no pause, no stagnation of existence with us; our tide of life rolled onward like a torrent, foaming, boiling, and sparkling, amidst the shouts of victory, the glitter of

triumph, the pageantry of festivals, the eloquence of the senate, the tumult of the forum, the crowning of one hero, the immolation of another;—amidst crimes that, from their greatness and their motives, shone out like virtues—and virtues which wore the bloody hue of crimes—but both crimes and virtues such as none but a Roman could have had the head to imagine, or the heart to execute. Such was our every-day life; but the present day was one of even more than usual interest; the formidable eagles were passing out at one gate with their mailed legions to distant battle; while, at another, Pompey and Scipio, and Camillus, and Cæsar, and the conqueror of Corioli, were returning victorious in the midst of rejoicing multitudes. The kings and warriors of many nations, from India to Britain, followed their triumphant wheels; and in the faces of those kings and warriors might be read defeat, and captivity, and wrath, and shame.

The masses of human life grew yet denser; the clamour of triumph swelled louder and louder, peal after peal, incessant, like the burst-

ing of a stormy sea upon the shore. I saw a king—he who a few days before had ruled a world, who had been the joy or the terror of more millions than Rome could count thousands—I saw him, this mighty one, dash out his brains, in the impatience of despair, with his fetters; and the many around shouted applauses on the noble deed, as if it had been a mimic death on the public stage; but, in the next moment, the glorious suicide was forgotten, the pageant passed on, and the marching legions trampled with indifference on the corse, till it became a portion of the highway.

In the midst of this swelling pageant, and while the temples were yet reeking with incense, I was sensible, though I knew not why, that I had become the object of general awe and hatred. Men scowled as they passed by me, and drew their garments more closely to them, to avoid the contamination of my nearness, as if I had carried plague and pestilence in my touch; or else turned pale with terror, and hurried on, as they would have fled from the path of the aspic. Still I kept on my way without stop or question, the startled crowd

dividing before me like water before the prow of a vessel when the gale is at the highest, till I found myself in the senate-house. A general murmur arose at my appearance, and all simultaneously started up from the bench on which I had seated myself, and passed over to the opposite side, where Cato sat lowering hatred and defiance, and Cicero was watching me with his keen, eagle eyes, while his whole frame trembled with visible emotion. I knew that I was Catiline, with the will to be lord of the city, or to lay it in ruins—I recked not which—and the dread and loathing I inspired were sweeter to me than flattery. Rome, that feared nothing else, feared me. I rejoiced that it was so; I could have laughed, but for prudence, at the majestic horrors of Cato—the doubtful brow of Cæsar, who loved the treason, though he shrank from its danger—and the spare face of the Consul, bleached with his midnight terrors, and not yet seeming quite assured of his safety, even when bucklered round by his friends. But even then, while my heart was swelling with present and expected triumph, the orator arose and thundered in my ears the

terrible "Quousque tandem, Catilina;" and a thousand voices re-echoed with deafening roar, "Quousque tandem—quousque tandem!" It was like the unholy spell of some wizard. The images of the gods, the marbles of the illustrious dead, in temple and in porch, in the forum and in the senate, all at that sound became instinct with life, and cried out with the pale orator, "Quousque—quousque!" I endeavoured to reply, to defend myself, to hurl back defiance on the wretched peasant of Arpinum, who had dared to brand a Roman and a noble; but my voice was no more, amidst the tumult, than the voice of a child would be to the cataract or the ravings of the tempest. I was stunned, beaten to the earth, by the mighty congregation of sounds; my eyes dazzled; my brain shook; and down I toppled—down—down—a precipice as deep as from heaven to earth, catching at every thing in the long descent to break my fall. But all was in vain: the stoutest oaks snapped under my grasp like the dried reeds of autumn; the ponderous masses of jutting rock sank from my tread like hills of sand. The weight of

some strange crime was upon me; and, loaded as I was, nothing was so stout it could give my foot a resting-place.

Unconsciousness, or sleep, its counterfeit, dropt a curtain between me and this stage of suffering, and again the shadows of my delirium took another form. I was in a spacious theatre, where the earlier events of the French revolution were being represented, till, by degrees, that which at first had been no more than a show became reality; and I, who had only been a spectator, was converted into an actor, and called upon to do and suffer. Sometimes I paraded the streets with the infuriated mob, shouting "Ca ira" and the Marseillois Hymn; while at others, I was the doomed object of popular hatred, and had a thousand hair-breadth escapes from the guillotine, which was going on incessantly by night and day, till the kennels ran with gore, and Paris had the look and smell of one huge slaughter-house. Still the cry was for blood—"more blood!" The sun itself refused to shine any longer on the polluted city. It was the third morning, and still no other light appeared in

the sky but a broad, crimson moon, in which Paris, with its deeds of death, was reflected as in a mirror suspended above our heads. This sign, however, prodigious as it was, had no effect except on a few weaker spirits; in general, the yells of blasphemy only became so much the louder and the fiercer; for the people were drunk with sin and blood as with new wine, and reeled along the streets like Atys and the frantic crew of Cybele in olden times, when their limbs were wet with recent gore, the foul offerings to the unknown goddess. A pale priest, venerable from his grey locks and placid features—placid even in the midst of all this fearful tumult—pointed with his aged hands to the red sign above, and bade us remember the fate of Nineveh. He was instantly seized by the mob, and dragged towards the scaffold, where the executioner incessantly plied his office, and, as each head fell, shrieked, rather than called, to the populace, “Encore un ! encore un !” He was the rabid ogre of the fairy tale, who scarcely devours one victim ere he clamours for another. Imagination cannot picture a more loathsome or terrific

monster. His face, though still human, bore the same revolting resemblance to the wolf that man, in his worst form, is sometimes found to bear to the monkey; his teeth, or rather fangs, for they were of enormous size, protruded from the bloated, purple lips, that were constantly drawn back and distorted with one eternal grin; his cheeks had the fixedness of marble, with that frightful ashy hue which is only to be found on the face of the dead, and can be compared to nothing living; the colour of his eyes, small, fierce, and burning, could not be distinguished; but they were deeply sunk under huge brows, which, like his head, were utterly bald of hair. In place of all other dress, he wore a winding-sheet, without belt or buckle, that at every movement spread and again closed upon his body, as if it had been a part of himself, and more like the wings of a bat in its action than the mere waving of a shroud.

The populace thrust forward the poor old priest with clubs and staves towards this monster, much as the keeper of some wild beast thrusts into its den the living victim that is destined

to gorge its appetite. In the twinkling of an eye, his head fell, when the man of blood shook his shroud till its swelling folds left his body naked, and, holding out to me his long arms, reiterated his incessant cry—"Encore un!" Before the rabble, who were well enough inclined to gratify his wishes, could seize me, I had burst my way through them, and, leaving the noise far behind me, had found a refuge in my hotel.

Here I fancied myself safe. I could still hear the shouting of the people, but it was at a distance; and the very sound of danger, thus remote, added to the feeling of security. It was like the idle roaring of the sea, from which we have just escaped, to listen on the safe summit of a rock to its impotent growlings for the prey that has been snatched from it. But what was my dismay, when, on turning to the window, I again saw the shrouded monster's face close to the glass, and heard again his terrific cry—"Encore un!"

With a speed such as only horror can give, I darted out of the room, and fled to the topmost chamber of the building, where, if at all, I

might reasonably hope to be beyond the reach of his fearful pursuit. But the lock!—the cursed lock that should have shut out mine enemy!—the key was fixed in its rusty wards beyond my power to move, and, strive all I would, I could not shoot the bolt.

In the midst of my desperate efforts, the key broke—shivered into a thousand pieces, as if it had been glass; and there I stood, hopeless, helpless, without the possibility of farther flight. I had reached my utmost limit.

But how could I be blind to those ponderous bolts and bars, that made any lock unnecessary, and were almost too weighty to be lifted? Nothing short of the hand and hammer of a blacksmith, and those, too, plied for hours, could break down a door with such defences. To draw and fasten them was no more than the work of a single instant; and no sooner was this effected than I felt myself as safe as in a castle of triple brass. In the triumph and excess of my confidence, I flung open the window to look for my baffled enemy, and tauntingly shouted his own cry, “Encore un!” A voice, close at my ear, returned the cry—“Encore un!”

At that hateful and hated sound, I reeled round as if staggering from a pistol shot, when—horror!—there was the monster, neither all man nor all wolf, but an inexplicable compound of both—a thing not to be defined by words—there he was, hanging over me, closing me about with his shroud like a serpent with his folds, his face close to mine. I gave not a moment's thought nor look to the depth below, but flung myself from the window, and, without knowing how or why, found myself a prisoner in the Temple, amongst many others, destined like myself to the guillotine.

Never were mirth and misery so intimately blended as amongst us, who could have no other expectation than that of death—whether to-day or to-morrow was uncertain—but still death by the edge of the axe, and before the week was over. Some wept, and some laughed—some prayed and some danced; and every time the sun set, its beams fell upon diminished numbers—till myself and four others were all that remained of the hundreds that filled the prison on my entrance.

It was the seventh day. Of our little band

it was doubtful who, if any, would see the next morning; and this very circumstance, this community of near danger, had linked our hearts more closely than years of friendship could have done, though cemented by rank and fortune. But this tie, close as it might be, was destined in a few hours only to be snapped asunder by the hand that, sooner or later, breaks all ties. The last rays of the sun were dimly melting into shadow, when my companions were summoned to attend their judges—a summons that was in itself equivalent to a sentence of death; for, with such judges, to try was to condemn. We all felt it to be so. Our farewells were accordingly warm and earnest, like those of men who were parting never to meet; and in a few minutes I was left to the solitude of my dungeon.

Night came on. I knew that I had not another day to live, and could count the hours between the present moment and the time when I should cease to be—a knowledge which, whether it be a curse or a blessing, is granted to none save the criminal doomed to expiate on earth his offences against the

children of earth. My fancy laboured with a thousand schemes of escape, none, perhaps, absolutely impracticable, but all improbable, and such only as a prisoner would conceive with the immediate fear of death before his eyes.

In the midst of these imaginings, I was struck by a light, shining through a crevice, as it seemed, of the prison-door. Life and liberty were in the pale glimmer. I started up to examine it, and found that the jailer, in his hurry, or in his intoxication—a state that always prevailed with him, more or less, towards the evening—had turned the key in the lock without first fairly closing the door, so that the bolt had been shot beside the staple. Here, then, was a chance of escape when I least expected it, if the occasion were only boldly, wisely, and seasonably employed. Boldly and in good time I resolved to use it; whether wisely or not, the result would shew.

Leaving my dungeon, I entered a long winding corridor, and, after passing through an empty room of somewhat less dimensions than the one which I had just quitted, at

length found it terminate in a sort of porch or hall, closed by the great gate of the prison, the only obstacle that now remained between me and freedom. It was, however, guarded, and trebly guarded, by locks, bolts, and bars, all of the most formidable calibre; but the jailer, with the keys at his girdle, and his hat slouched over his face so as to conceal his features, sate in an arm-chair before a blazing wood fire, which roared up the chimney, and danced in broad light upon the walls. The cigar that he had been smoking hung loosely in his hand, half burnt out; and by his side was a rough deal table on three legs, scored and stained with the marks of former debauchery, and now set out with a horn jug and a flagon, that, by the smell, had contained brandy, thus proving the fixedness of his habits, while all around him was changing, not only from day to day, but from hour to hour, and, it might almost be said, from minute to minute.

I listened, and was convinced that the man slept; but, besides that his slumber was far from sound, as was evident from his disturbed

breathing and the occasional lifting of his arms, I could hardly hope, under any circumstances, to detach the keys from his belt, and undo the ponderous bolts and bars without awaking him. There was but little time for choice or reflection. Such an opportunity was not likely to last long, and still less to occur a second time, so that what I did I must do quickly. To murder him was all that was left for me, and, seeing no cause to hesitate when the alternative was his life or mine, I drew from my bosom a knife, that, by some negligence on the part of the searchers, I had been fortunate enough to retain.

In another instant he had been with the dead. I raised my arm to strike; but just then he seemed to be awaking. I paused: there was a smothered laugh beneath the hat, and, strange to say, it thrilled through me. I trembled from head to foot; but there was no time to be lost, and the weapon glittered in its descent — when the appalling cry of “Encore un!” again burst upon my ear, striking me almost senseless. The cloak and hat dropped from the supposed sleeper; and

there again was the untiring monster, in all his hideousness! For an instant we gazed on each other, without words and without motion. I had no power either to stir or speak—to deprecate his approach, or to fly from it.

The spell slowly dissolved. I crept, or rather glided from him, my eyes still fixed upon his visage, till the wall prevented farther flight. I was now like a stag at bay. He began to move in his turn. With a long, measured stride, he put forth one foot, and it came again to the floor with the sound of an enormous hammer on the anvil. There, for the space of a minute, he paused, fixing me with his fierce red eyes, that seemed to burn with some unholy fire. He took a second step, slow and clanging as the first—a third—a fourth!—and the fifth brought him close to me—ay, so close that I could look into those terrible eyes and see myself imaged there. And I did so: I could not help it, in spite of the horror with which they inspired me.

His shroud now folded round me—tighter—tighter—till the hair stood erect upon my head,

and my breast laboured to bursting. I struggled and struggled, under the horrible sense of suffocation, while he folded me yet more closely, his voice sounding all the time—
“Encore un!”

The catastrophe of this fearful struggle was lost to me in a rapid succession of visions, that came more or less distinct, and again melted away, like those fantastic forms which the clouds build up in a summer's evening, when the winds are high, and the sun is sinking amidst a world of vapours. I skimmed the air with the birds; I dived into the waters with the sea-mew, or floated on its surface with a fleet of gallant barks, that were sailing to some unknown land, which no one could name, but which all knew to be the land of the sun, where the spice grew like acorns, and the stones of the highway were emeralds and diamonds. As we neared it, the air grew softer, the skies brighter, the waters clearer: it was a world unlike the world we had left, not in degree, but in kind; and the feelings it excited required a new language for their expression.

But even then the scene faded. I was burning at the stake by the side of the Huguenots, surrounded by thousands, who in general did not, or dared not, pity us, though the faces of many were convulsed with eager horror; and here and there the features of some young female, in spite of beads and rosary, expressed a sympathy with our fate. The flames from the new-lit fagots hissed like serpents. Anon, before the fires, that wrapt us as with a garment, were burnt out, I was tossing on the waters of the Polar Sea, amidst mountains of blue ice, whose tops were in the clouds. The surge dashed and broke upon these colossal masses as upon so many rocks of granite. On a sudden, a crash like thunder stilled the mutinous billows. The huge icebergs were rent and shivered, and their summits dissolved into floods, that came roaring and tumbling down their rugged sides, till all around us was a world of cataracts, and in the pool below our little bark tossed and eddied like a dry leaf in the whirlwind.

Again the scene changed. I was an Indian prince, hunting the tiger with my attendant

rajahs, richer and prouder than the Persian satraps of old, when Xerxes led forth his millions to perish on the Grecian soil, and build up an everlasting record to the glory of the Athenian. The sun set,—and rose,—and again it set,—and still we were following our spotted prey over stock and stone, dashing through rivers and down precipices so steep, the chamois must have broken his neck in the attempt to descend them, till I had at last far, far outstripped my companions of the chase. The tiger was now within a few yards of me. I fired and wounded him in the flank, as was evident from the gush of blood that followed. The animal turned suddenly round upon me, rearing himself on his hind legs, with a hideous growl that sounded like a human laugh, and,—horror!—there again was the man of blood, with his cry of “Encore un!” Tongue cannot tell, nor brain imagine, the despair, the loathing, the shrinking of soul and body, that I experienced at again coming in contact with this eternal apparition! I called on the sands of the desert to rise in clouds and bury me—on the mountains, to fall and crush me—on the

distant ocean, to ascend in a second deluge and swallow me. And my wish seemed likely to be accomplished; for, while I was yet in the horrors of his presence, by some inexplicable shifting of the scene I was in Africa, and the past was as if it had never been.

On every side, as far as the eye could reach, was sand—nothing but sand—hot and burning sand—which scorched the weary soles of the feet as though I had been walking on molten lava. Suddenly the wind began to howl, and at its voice the fiery mass rolled, and swelled, and surged, and was lifted up as the storm lifts up the sea; but its waves were more like mountains. Then again the unstable mass formed itself into moving columns, and these giants of the desert traversed, or rather swept, the waste with a speed that made flight hopeless. But I was not fated to perish by them. They rolled around me harmless, and, in less than what seemed an hour, all was again calm, and the sun sunk down upon silence—a silence that was lifeless!

A raging thirst tormented me. But no stream was near in the moon-lit expanse,

and the night of the desert had no dews to moisten my parched lips. Had any benevolent genius stood before me, with an offered diadem in one hand, and a glass of fair water in the other, I had rejected empire, and snatched at the more humble boon with rapture. The pains of fire or of steel—and I had felt both within the last few hours—were nothing to the torments of this terrible thirst: it drank my very life-blood.

In the midst of this unutterable agony I heard, or thought I heard, the rushing of water. Strange that I had not seen it before! within a hundred yards of me was an oasis, or island of the desert, covered with a grove of palms, and a remarkable sort of tree, for which I knew no name; but it breathed a fragrance sweeter than all the spicy gales of Araby the Blessed; yet still sweeter to my fancy was the little crystal spring that bubbled from the turf beneath, sparkling, and leaping along over stone and pebble, as if rejoicing in the soft moonlight. If ever there was bliss on earth, it was mine for that brief moment when my eyes first fell upon the stream. But, like

every joy beneath the sun, it proved a shadow, an insubstantial vapour, fading the very instant it was grappled with. When I would have drunk, all was mist and confusion; and then, for awhile, my troubled fancy slept.

There was a blank in my existence—for aught I know for hours. Had I been dead, the mind and body could not have been wrapt in a repose more deep or senseless.

After a time, it seemed to me as if I awoke from a long, long slumber, all that had passed shewing to my memory rather as the dream of sleep than of delirium. On this awaking, I had a distinct perception that I was in my bedroom, dangerously ill, if not dying. But a great change had taken place since ten o'clock. In the middle of the chamber was an unfinished coffin, supported by tressels, on which several funereal figures were busily at work, driving in the nails, that were yet deficient, with huge sledge-hammers. Their blows fell fast as hail-stones, striking forth a continued stream of fire, the only light they had to work by; and it lent a horrid hue to their faces, such as belongs to the dead rather than to the living.

It was a ghastly sight for a sick man to see these creatures employed upon his own coffin; for that it was intended for me, I knew too well—how, or whence, I cannot say—but the conviction was as strong upon me as if I had read my own name upon the lid. The hag of a nurse, too!—she who was paid to watch over my sickness—to guard me from every danger—she, too, was busy amongst them, urging on the work, and giving her directions to those who were prompt enough of themselves without her assistance. It was evidently a labour of love to all concerned in it.

At length their task was finished; not a nail, not a screw, was wanting; every thing was ready but the corse to put in it.

At the striking of the last blow, the owl whooped thrice; and there was a flapping of wings, and the beating of some hard, horny substance against the window.

“He is here!” said one of the men, drawing back the curtain.

And there, indeed, was a monstrous owl, staring at me with his red eyes, and beating the glass impatiently with his wings. The

cricket answered from the hearth with a shriller cry ; and the death-watch by the side of my bed was louder and faster in his ominous clicking.

A deep silence followed. Nothing, for a few minutes, was heard in the chamber but my own breathing, which fear had rendered hard and hurried. The funereal figures stood with uplifted hammers, like men in anxious and momentary expectation ; and even the old hag, though her coarse features were distorted with the workings of impatience, yet remained silent.

Again the owl whooped, striking the window so furiously that it rattled in the frame ; and again the cricket cried, and the death-watch answered as before. At these signs of increasing impatience, he who had drawn the curtain spoke again :—

“Master ! shall I toll the bell ? The owl HAS whooped,—the cricket cried,—and the death-watch called.”

“Not yet,” was the answer. “It is not quite twelve ; the clock must strike first.—Be still, Sir Urian,” he added, turning to the bird

of night, who flapped his pinions yet more vehemently at the delay;—"your time is not yet come."

At this rebuke, the owl folded his wings upon his breast, and the cricket and the death-watch hushed their cry.

But even this respite, short as it was, seemed too long for the hag. She could not wait for the fated hour, when, as it seemed, death would of himself visit me, but must needs anticipate his coming, though the hand of the time-piece on the table pointed to the last quarter before twelve. Filling a cup from one of the many phials, she came to my bed-side, and croaked out, "It is time; drink, and die!" But I stoutly refused the draught so ominously presented. The hag persisted, uttering dreadful, half-intelligible menaces; and, in the very desperation of terror, I struggled as for life, and endeavoured to dash down the chalice. But I was a mere child in her hands. She forced me back upon my pillow with a strength that to my feebleness seemed gigantic, and poured the poison down my throat in spite of my utmost resistance.

No sooner was it swallowed than it crept like ice through my veins, freezing up life as it stole on, drop by drop, and inch by inch, the numbness beginning at my feet, and mounting upward till it curdled at my heart. It must not, however, be supposed that I was silent during this deadly march of the poison; on the contrary, my rage was, at least, equal to my terror; and their united influence was powerful enough to loosen the bonds that had hitherto kept my tongue tied, when to have spoken would have been some relief to the overwhelming sense of agony.

I poured forth the bitterness of my heart in curses that staggered the old hag, and sounded tremendous even to my own hearing. At first she only stared, like one struck by sudden wonder; then, as surprise gave way to fear, she covered her face with her hands, as if to shut out the sounds that were too horrible for bearing; and, finally, fled with the long-protracted howl of the wolf when driven from its prey.

I was dead, and knew that I was dead. I had consciousness without life—sense only for

suffering—and lay a fettered prisoner in my narrow prison-house. Still *SELF*, that centre-point to which in life all pain and all pleasure are referred—that individual but invisible existence, which remains entire even when the limbs are lopped away from the trunk—which, mutilate the body as you will, retains in its wholeness the same capacity of suffering and enjoyment—this *SELF* still was. *I* lived, though my body had perished; and the stings and bruising of the insensible flesh were, by some mysterious agency, reflected on the spirit.

But I was soon to be called to another sphere, and to loftier modes of suffering. While I was yet mouldering, a voice reached me, and it sounded like a tempest—"Let the dead arise!" Death, which had closed my ears to all other sounds, could not make me deaf to this awful summons. I arose from the grave as from a bed, shaking off the mouldering garment of the flesh, and was in eternity, myself a portion of it however indefinite. There was neither sun, nor moon, nor star, nor earth, nor space, nor time: all was eternity—immeasurable, incomprehensible eternity!

And there I was alone with my own conscience, that with a thousand tongues spoke out the sentence of anguish, and drove me onward through the *Boundless* without rest, for in it was no resting-place. I called on Death; but Death himself had passed away with the world. Not even an echo answered to my cry. I called on those who, like me, were to know anguish; but either they were not, or else were lost in the void.

On a sudden a whirlwind arose. I heard the mighty flapping of its wings as it rushed on towards me through the *Boundless*, and again felt that there was hope. The darkness rolled away before it; the sound of many instruments came up from the deep; and I was hurried onward, till at last, by a transition as rapid as the passing of a sunbeam over the water, I found myself in a state, blissful indeed, but such as almost sets description at defiance. I heard the voice of those I loved so dearly; I saw their little fairy forms gliding dimly about me, as if in mist; but I could neither move, nor speak, nor in any way, as it seemed, make them

sensible of my nearness. They were talking of me. I heard one say to the other, "To-morrow is his birth-day!" And then they began to sing in low, plaintive tones, one of the wild strains of a wild drama that I had written many years before, and which was even too apt to my situation. Strange to say, though till that moment I could as soon have repeated the whole of the Iliad as my own lines, yet ever since, the address of the poor Adine to Faustus has remained indelibly written upon my memory. It ran thus :—

Oh, Saul ! oh, king !
Wake from thy fearful dream !
The chains, that bind
Thy horror-haunted mind,
Drop from thee, as the stream
Of music gushes from the trembling string.
Softly, softly breathe, my lyre,
Stilling every wild desire !
Let thy music fall as sweet
On the anxious, listening ear,
As the odours to the sense
When the summers close is near.
More soft, more slow !
The measure flow !
Softer, slower yet !
Till the sweet sound beget
A joy that melts like woe.

I listened, and wept! Oh, the unutterable luxury of those tears! They worked upon my burning brain as the long-withheld dews fall upon the dry and rifted earth. The fever of my blood was stilled, and the air seemed to blow so coolly upon my parched cheeks! A sense of enjoyment stole over me, calm as the breath of a summer's evening, but vivid beyond the power of words to paint it.

The sounds of that wild strain came fainter and fainter; the fairy forms waxed dim; my eyes grew heavier;—I slept.

The morning awakened me—it was not till the sun had been up for many hours—but when it did break my long slumber, it found me far other than it had left me on the preceding day. Then I was dying; now the dangerous crisis was past. Then I had neither eyes, nor ears, nor indeed any other sense, for pleasure; now the sight of the blue sky alone, seen through the window as I lay in bed, was a source of infinite delight. Even, the poor old nurse, who, in the hours of the night had been

so hateful to me, was, in my altered mood, a kind, officious creature, whose happy face had in it as little as could be well conceived of the night-hag.

By-the-by, the good old creature, half-laughing, half-crying, reproached me with having beaten her in my delirium. This, if true—and I much fear it was—must have been when she brought me the medicine, and my overwrought fancy represented her as conspiring with the shadowy men of the hammer to poison me. Nor have I the least doubt, if it were worth while, that all my visions might in the same way be traced to some existing or forgone reality.

HARRY WOODRIF.

THE smugglers are the only race of people in this country who have not been at all acted upon by the improvements of society. Every where else civilization has been hard at work, scouring through the land with the speed of a twopenny postman, building schools, breeching Highlanders, and grubbing up the spirit of adventure from the very bosom of rocks and mountains. It has made a smart attack too on the gipsies, but with only a sort of pye-bald success, robbing the gallows to augment the population of Botany Bay; taking

off the edge of their daring, yet, by no means lessening their indolence, or their love of petty larceny.

But the smuggler—the sturdy smuggler—is still the same creature he was fifty years ago, and, even allowing him to be a villain—villain is a hard word—there is yet something noble in his doings and his sufferings. In fact, the good people of this city know as little about him as they do of Prester John, or the Cham of Tartary. I have some right to speak on the subject, for one part of my early days was spent on the sea-coast, when, to my shame be it spoken, I preferred the smugglers to my books, and, from many wild pranks, became a favorite among them.

There was one outlaw in particular, Harry Woodriff, or Woodrieve, who was much attached to the MASTER, as they called me, partly, I believe, from the eagerness with which I listened to his tales of himself and his associates, and not a little because he mistook my romantic feelings for courage. Our acquaintance, or rather our intimacy, commenced by my going out with him in a

storm, to the relief of a distressed collier, when the chances were twenty to one against our ever returning; but with me it certainly was not courage; there was an exaltation of the spirits more like the effect of wine, as we swept along the waves, that one moment rose like a mountain, and in the next opened almost to the very sands.

I feared no danger, for I *felt* no danger, and there can hardly be courage without consciousness of peril. But Harry was not the man to look so nicely into things; I had shewn no symptoms of fear, and that was enough for him, who held that a stout spirit included all the cardinal virtues: ever after he loved me as a son, and many a tale did I gather from the sturdy smuggler, as he paced up and down the cliff with his glass in his hand, on the look out for what the sea was next to bring him.

It was not, however, of Harry's early stories that I would speak at present, though a time may come for them too, but of our meeting two years ago, when we least expected it, and for an end that thrilled my blood with horror. Remember this is no fiction; here and there

some local deviations are introduced, for reasons sufficiently obvious, but the main facts are as true as that the sun is in the heavens.

It was in the autumn of 1820 that my friend, Lieutenant E——, invited me to pass a few weeks with him on the coast where he was stationed on the Preventive service, an invitation that had been too often repeated to be again slighted without offence to honest Frank, whose heart was much better ballasted than his head. Accordingly I set out a little before sun-rise, and by six o'clock at night I reached my friend's house. This was a snug cottage, about a hundred yards from a long bed of shingle, which had originally been thrown up there by the sea, and which now served as a defence against its encroachments.

As it was impossible to drive the chaise up to the door, I was obliged to get out, and, having paid the post-boy, shouldered my portmanteau, and strode forward lustily to the cottage, where the first thing I heard was the voice of my friend, the Lieutenant, loud in anger on some half dozen subjects, which he contrived to twist together like the different

plies of a cable, and of which my absence seemed to be the principal.

“Confound all land-lubbers!—Peg, you jade, hand us up the supper—Kit not cleaned my barkers yet!—if I do not give that fellow monkey’s allowance—Betsy—What a d—d fool the captain must be to let them smugglers get off—Betsy—Well, well, George—Betsy—D—n it, you’re as stupid as the girl. Hand over that bundle of cigars—I tell you what, George—”

“Well, what will you tell me?” said I, breaking in upon his medley soliloquy.

“George!—glad to see you with all my heart and soul, boy. You’re just in time.”

“Yes, I smell the supper.”

“You shall smell gunpowder, my boy, before you are two days older. A cargo from Dunkirk—red stern—twelve men and a boy—white gunnel—know all about her—figured on the other side,” he added with a knowing wink, at the same time jingling some loose silver in his pocket. “D—n it all, I was afraid you would be too late for the fun, but here you are, and in good time.”

"I can't say I see the fun."

"But you shall, boy; you shall go with us; they fight like devils; no sneakers amongst them."

I fancy my face testified no great symptoms of delight at the proposed amusement, for the Lieutenant, though not much given to observation, exclaimed quickly, "You're not afraid, lad?"

Still, I rather think, I should have declined this favour—for Frank really meant it as a favour—if his wife had not come in at the critical moment: no man would even seem to be a coward in the presence of a woman, and, before I well knew what I was about, my word was pledged to the business, to the infinite delight of Frank, who thereupon showed me a brace of barkers, as he called them, that Kit was to scour for my especial service.

As to any danger I might run, that never once entered into Frank's calculation; he looked on these smuggling frays much as a fox-hunter looks on the chase, in which bruises and broken heads are necessary contingencies, not to be talked of for a moment, and which

by no means take away from the pleasure of the pursuit.

Supper over, and the regular allowance of pipes and grog being duly despatched, I was suffered to retire, with a promise from Frank of calling me if there was any stir among the smugglers,—a promise that, it may be easily supposed, was altogether unsolicited on my my part; indeed, I could well have willingly dispensed with his punctuality on this point, but I knew him too well to doubt his keeping his word, and it was now over late to draw back; to bed therefore I went, in all that ferment of the spirits which men of sedentary habits never fail to experience after a day of travel.

It was ten o'clock before I rose from my morning sleep—the only sleep I had enjoyed—and, on going down to breakfast, I found that my friend was out, and myself very much in the way of Peggy and her mistress, whose daily occupations were at a stand still from my laziness. My hostess had involuntarily caught up a broom that had been left by Peggy, and I plainly saw that she was burning

to commence a vigorous campaign against the dust and the spiders. In pity, therefore, to her troubles, I swallowed down my breakfast, without, indeed, the least danger to my throat, and posted off in quest of my friend the Lieutenant, who, she told me, was at the battery, a name by which they had dignified a large mound of earth with two old guns, that might be said to be on half-pay, for though they retained their place, they were never employed. It was not, however, my fate to reach the battery that morning, for I must needs try to make a short cut to my end, by which, as many wise men have done before me, I lost it altogether.

The ground, a large tract of open country, was intersected by dykes; the first of these, having low banks, and not being very wide, I got over easily enough; the next was too much for me, and I therefore bent my course to a narrower part, which again led me into another difficulty, to be avoided by a similar circuit, and so on, till I was completely entangled. The greater my efforts now, the more they removed me from my object, and, at last,

they brought me to a small hollow, partly formed by nature, and partly by the chalk having been originally dug out for the purpose of making lime ; three sides of it were perpendicular rocks, with here and there a few broad weeds, not unlike dock-leaves, shooting through the interstices ; the fourth sloped roughly down to a depth of ninety feet, or perhaps more, and was covered with briars that twined their long thin arms with the high grass, and made the descent a work of toil, except by one beaten path.

In breadth it was about two hundred feet, in length full twice as many. In the bottom were a cottage and a garden, as I expected, for I had been used to these artificial glens in Kent, where they are sure to find occupants the moment they are deserted by the chalk-miners. A soil is easily and cheaply formed from the sea-weed, while the exclusion of the wind, and the reflection of the sun from the chalk, make a shelter for trees and vegetables, which will thrive there much better than on the open downs, exposed as they are to all the bleakness of the weather, and the influence of the salt sea-air.

Curiosity led me down into the hollow, where I found the door of the cottage open, and the first object that attracted my attention was a young girl, apparently not more than seventeen years of age; even in a drawing-room, amidst lights and crowds, the enemies to all romance, I should yet have noticed her as something singular; but here, in this wild glen, where the mind was previously prepared by local circumstance for the reception of every fanciful impression, I felt as much startled at her presence as if she had been a shadow from the world of spirits.

Her form, though extremely elegant in its proportions, seemed as light and airy as if no earth had entered into its composition; her hair curled in jet-black ringlets about a face that was as pale as marble; her eyes were of a deep blue, with an expression that was something akin to madness; and a dark melancholy sate on her forehead, that seemed to fling a shadow over the whole face, and deepen its natural paleness. What rendered her still more striking was the utter discordance of her dress and manners with the luxurious poverty about

her, in which wealth and want were strangely blended. A deal table, scored and stained, was waited upon by half-a-dozen mahogany chairs, of as many fashions as there were chairs; two large silver goblets stood in the same row with a party of coarse white plates, flawed and fractured in every direction; and a Brussels carpet was spread on the floor, though the laths of the ceiling showed through the plaster above like ribs from the thin sides of poverty.

On the mantel-piece, which was tolerably well-smoked, was a handsome gold time-keeper, flanked by a whole host of tobacco-pipes in every possible stage, from the black stump to the immaculate whiteness of the perfect tube. Higher up, guns, pistols, and cutlasses were ranged in formidable order, and with the same love of variety no one weapon had its fellow. I had been too much used to such dwellings in my boyhood not to guess pretty well upon what company I had stumbled, and when a man came out of the inner room I was prepared to see a smuggler, but not to see Harry Woodriff. It was Harry, however!—the identical Harry!—and though full fifteen

years had elapsed since we last walked together on the cliffs of Kent, I knew him that instant; it was impossible to mistake that peculiar face; the features were too strongly cast originally to be much affected by time, which, indeed, had only hardened the mould through successive years, and not altered it. His name burst from my lips involuntarily—"Harry Woodriff!"

"Aye, aye," exclaimed the old man, without the least symptom of recognition.—"What cheer now, messmate?"

"Don't you know me, Harry? don't you remember your old friend George, and our going off to the brig Sophy!"

"What! the Master?—Sink the customs! you can't be he; George was a little rosy-faced chap, no higher than this table."

"That was fifteen years ago, Harry; and fifteen years will make a difference in your *little rosy-faced chaps no higher than the table.*"

"Right, messmate;—Sink the customs! and so you are the Master?—D—n you."—And he grasped me with his iron hand till my bones cracked again, though without the slightest

change of feature on his part, or any symptoms of emotion in his voice.—“Am as glad to see you as though you were an anker of brandy—Nance, girl,”—turning to his daughter, who had hitherto looked on our meeting with silent curiosity,—“fetch us a drop of the right stuff, and a clean pipe—though stay, there’s plenty of pipes here.”

“I don’t smoke, Harry, and as to drinking,”—

“You don’t drink neither?”

“Not at this hour.”

“Why Lunnun has clean spoilt you, Master; you could smoke, and drink too for that matter, and without asking whether it was morn or midnight. But you’re another-guess sort of chap now. You had better have staid in Kent, Master.”

“Why did *you* leave it?”

“Wouldn’t do—grew hot as h—ll—sink the customs!”

“I doubt whether you have much mended the matter by coming here.”

“Aye, aye; hard times, master, when a poor man can’t eat his bread and cheese without

fighting for it first. Not that I much mind that either, if things were a little more on the square, but 'tis d—d hard to fight with the rope round one's neck. It was all fair enough when they looked after the cargo and let the man alone: if they could seize the goods, that was their luck; if we got off, that was ours; and all friends afterwards. But now if they catch you, they haul you off to jail, and if you fight for it, they hang you up as though you were a pirate—sink the customs!"

"Better take to some other business."

"Why, look ye, lad; I'm hard on sixty, and that's over late to go on a new tack. But here comes Nance with the grog — What's that bottle, girl?"

"Some of the claret that you brought over last week for the inn-keeper of ——"

"Avast heaving, Nance—not that I think the Master would tell tales, but, —draw the cork."

This was more easily said than done, a cork-screw forming no part of Harry's domestic economy, and for a long time Nancy worked at it with a broken fork to very little purpose.

"Hand it over," said Harry, and he gravely knocked off the neck of the bottle.

"There; I've done it—brave liquor it is too, so help yourself, master. Sink the customs! do you call that helping yōurself? here's a change! you could put your beak deep enough into a pint pot when you were a younker."

"Let me help you, Sir," said Nancy, and she filled up my glass with a grace that certainly did not belong to a smuggler's cottage. I could not keep my eyes off her, and the old man must have read my thoughts, for he spoke as if in answer to them.

"She did not learn it of me, you may be sure, Master; it was all got at Miss Trott's boarding school."

"So, so," thought I—"another precious instance of parents educating their children above the situation they are to fill in life,—refining them into misery." Something of the same kind was evidently passing through Nancy's mind, for her eyes were suffused with tears, to the sore annoyance of the smuggler, who was dotingly fond of her notwithstanding

his apparent apathy, and who was loved by her in return with no less sincerity.

“What’s the matter with you, Nance?—squalls again?—is there any thing I can do for you?”

There was a beseeching look in Nancy’s eyes, the meaning of which I did not then understand, but which was perfectly intelligible to Harry, for he added, though in his usual even tone,—“That is, any thing but the old story. Is it a gown you want?—silk?—Brussels lace?—only say the word, and it’s yours; for not to tell you a lie, Nance, if you wished for all the shells that lie between here and Dunkirk, you should have them, or I’d drown for it—sink the customs!”

And all this he said without the least correspondence of tone, or, indeed, any symptom of feeling, except that he laid one of his huge iron paws on the girl’s right shoulder, and gently patted her. Nancy made no answer but by leaning her head on her father’s brawny bosom. Following up my first idea of the unfitness of such a situation to a girl of her habits, I referred her grief to that cause; and under the

idea of pleasing her, I ventured to suggest that she would do better by seeking her fortune in the world, and even proffered my assistance. She cut short this proposal, however, with a tone of energy and decision that completely silenced me.

"I shall go no where, Sir, without my father. Where he is, there his daughter must and shall be."

There was a moment's pause; I was too much confounded by the manner of this address to make any reply: Harry kept on smoking his pipe as if we had been talking of matters that in no wise concerned him, and in a language that he did not understand, while the girl herself seemed to be struggling with some internal resolution. For a few moments she fixed her wild flashing eyes on me with a gaze so keen that it made the blood start up into my cheeks, till at last, as if satisfied with the inquiry, she repeated in a milder tone, "I will not leave my father—is this a time to leave him?"—and she pointed to his grey hairs—"is this a place? I will not leave him. But oh, Sir, if you are his friend, persuade him to

quit this life, which must sooner or later end by the waves, or the sword, or the gallows. Persuade him, Sir;—'tis a better deed than giving ten alms to the poor, for in that you save the body only, but here you save both soul and body. Persuade him, Sir;—he shall not want—indeed he shall not—I will work for him, beg for him, steal for him—”

The poor creature burst into tears, exclaiming, “O father! father!”

“Hey for Dunkirk! no soft-water, Nance; you know I can't abide it. So—hark ye in your ear.”

He drew his daughter aside, whispered a few words with his usual imperturbability, and finished by exclaiming aloud, “I will! sink the customs!”

“But will you indeed?”

“There's my hand to it—smuggler's faith! will you believe me now?”

Nancy only answered with a kiss; but there was still a restless expression about her eyes and lips that showed she was far from being satisfied; at the time I attributed it to some lurking distrust of her father's sincerity, for I

had no doubt that he had promised her to give up smuggling ; shrewd, however, as this guess was, it did not happen to be quite correct, and it was only by combining one fact with another that I afterwards got at the whole truth. It seems that Harry had risked all he possessed, nearly four hundred pounds, in a single venture to Dunkirk, under the conduct of his son, and his promise to quit the free trade was with express reference to the safe return of his cargo,—a sort of compromise that could not altogether quiet the fears of Nancy. To those who are unacquainted with such scenes it may appear strange that the old man did not rather go out with the boat himself ; but the fact is that in smuggling, as much, if not more, depends on the management by land than by water. Experience has shown these people that they can put very little confidence in each other ; the temptations to betray are much too strong for their slender stock of honesty ; and the chiefs, therefore, seldom trust more than one of their associates with the secret of the boat's landing-place, which one the rest follow at a moment's warning, through brake and

briar, over moor and mountain, like so many wild ducks after their leader. Now, Harry thought, and wisely, that such a secret could be trusted to none so well as to himself, and he had therefore sent out his son, a stout able young fellow, who had been brought up to the business from his cradle, while he himself staid behind to look after the landing of the cargo.

It was now nearly two o'clock, the lieutenant's dinner hour, and I rose to take my leave, saying, "To-morrow I will be here again."

With this, I left the glen and returned to the Lieutenant's; but, notwithstanding my improved knowledge in the geography of these parts, I did not arrive time enough to save my credit with my little fat hostess, whom I found in sad tribulation, fretting and fuming over half-cold fish, fowls done to death, and pudding that was as heavy as lead. .

The day passed as might have been expected; my friend, in his capacity of host, toiled like a mill-horse to entertain me, and I, as in duty bound, laboured equally to be entertained, though it was by objects that could have no

interest for me whatever. I was dragged successively to see his new cutter, the two old guns, the kennel of his seamen,—I can give it no better name,—and the berth of his Mids, who, according to his idea of things, were lodged like princes. Their principality, however, did not appear to me a subject for much envy; it consisted of two apartments, one of which was a general bed-room, and the other a general parlour. The floor was sanded, and the white-washed walls were ornamented with a variety of long and short heads, and sundry witty inscriptions, such as "Tom Jenkins is a fool," "Sweet Polly Beaver," "Snug's the word," &c. &c. The windows, indeed, looked out upon the sea, and close under them was a patch of garden, which the Mids, in the lack of better occupation, had surrounded with a wall, formed of rude chalk-blocks, loosely piled together, without cement; under this shelter a few cabbages contrived to run to seed amidst a luxuriant crop of thistles.

Having seen these lions, we returned to tea, and passed the dreary interval between that and supper-time in a water excursion, which

only wanted a more congenial companion to have been delightful. I know nothing more annoying to a man of romantic habits than being linked in with your plain matter-of-fact folks, who have no ideas associated with any subject beyond what are presented to them by the obvious qualities of form and colour. My friend, though an excellent seaman, was precisely one of these; he saw nothing in the ocean but a road for shipping; and as to the sky, I question much whether he ever looked up to it, except to take an observation. Still this water-excursion was not without its use; it had whiled away three hours, and that was something; it had procured me an excellent appetite for supper, and that too was not to be slighted; and lastly, the sea-air had so much influence on me that, when bed-time came, I dropt fast asleep the very moment I laid my head on my pillow. My sleep, however, was any thing but quiet; I dreamt, and my dreams were full of grotesque images, all more vivid than any I have ever experienced either before or after. The agony was too great for endurance, and I awoke. To my surprise there

stood Frank by my bed-side, a pair of cutlasses under his arm, and a candle in one hand, while with the other he pulled and tugged at me might and main. He had no doubt been the mad dog of my dreams, for his fingers were closed on my arm with the gripe of a blacksmith's vice.

"Why, how now, lad? you ate too much of the pork last night." And with that he gave me another shake as if he meant to shake my arm out of its socket.

"What's the matter?—what's the matter?" I exclaimed, for I was not yet quite awake; and mad dogs, and Nancies, were making a strange medley of it in my brain.

"There's no time for talking—clap on your rags as quick as may be."

And I set about dressing myself almost mechanically, while he paced up and down the room, as if he had been walking the quarter-deck, whistling a very popular, but not very elegant, tune in all manner of times, now fast, and now slow, according to the rise and fall of his fits of im-patience. In a few minutes, the last tie was tied, and the last button buttoned.

“All ready, lad?—here’s your cutlass then, and your barkers. And now we’ll clap on all sails, and be up with them in a jiffy.”

I was by this time fully awake, and conscious of our business, for the night-air, that blew on me as we left the cottage, sobered down the fumes of sleep in an instant. The wind was cold and boisterous, rolling the clouds along in dark broken masses over the sky, where neither moon nor stars were shining, but there was a dull grey light that just served to make the darkness visible. Frank was incessantly urging me to speed, though we were going at a brisk rate, and, as we went along, communicated to me the whole matter, as an additional stimulus to my tardiness.

This was precisely what I had anticipated ; a smuggling boat had long been expected on this very night, according to his information from the other side of the water ; and some fishermen, bribed to his purpose, had kept a sharp look-out from their smack, and had thus been able to give him timely warning of their approach. This story was told with great glee by my friend, but I must honestly confess that “I had no devotion to the business.”

While all was dark, and still, and nothing announced that the fray was near, and I had reason to believe that it was at least a mile from us, I only felt anxious and bewildered ; but when a sudden shout burst on us, followed by a rapid discharge of fire-arms, and the turn of the cliff showed us the battle, that moment begun, and not a hundred yards from us—what a change then came over me !—it was not fear, for it had none of the palsy of fear ; my hand was firm and my eye was certain ; but it was a most intense consciousness of self and of the present moment. I felt I scarce knew how, nor even at this distance of time can I well make out what were my feelings ; to be thus suddenly dragged from warm sleep, to deal with blows and death on the midnight shingle, was enough to stupify any man of peaceful habits, and such mine had been for years.

At this moment, a voice seemed to whisper close to my ear—"Mary !" So perfect was the illusion—if it was illusion—that I involuntarily echoed—"Mary !" and looked up for the speaker. No Mary was there—how, indeed, could she be?—still it was her

voice ; I was neither drunk, nor dreaming, nor lunatic, and yet I heard it as clearly as ears could hear it, and at the sound my heart swelled, and I felt that I could dare any thing. In an instant I was in the very midst of the fray, dealing my blows right and left with all the fury of a maniac. As I learnt afterwards, my death had been certain twenty times in the course of the scuffle, if it had not been for Frank, and still more for poor Harry, who was fighting among the smugglers, yet could not forget his young friend, though his hand was against him.

Many a blow that was meant for me was parried by their watchfulness ; but of this I knew nothing. When all was over, and it had scarcely lasted ten minutes, I had only a confused recollection of having struggled stoutly for life amidst sword-cuts and pistol-shots, and men dropping as if struck by some invisible power. It is difficult to make any body understand this who never has been in danger, or who has so often faced it that the circumstance has lost its novelty ; these are sensations that belong only to the first time of perilling life, and are totally independent

of fear or courage ; they cannot occur a second time.

The fray ended by the seizure of all the goods, the death of five smugglers, and the capture of two, who afterwards contrived to get away. As to the rest, they all escaped, as I then imagined, by the favour of the dykes and their better knowledge of the country, with the exception of one poor wretch, who was desperately wounded ; him they bore into a near boat-house, which was nothing more than a rude shed, pitched and tarred, and covered with dry sea-weed, as a sort of shelter for the nets and skiffs when not employed.

Hither I went with the rest, and looked upon a scene that I shall not easily forget ; the poor creature was lying on the ground, pale, and dripping with blood ; his neckcloth had been taken off, and his clothes were torn to tatters. As the torches glared on his eyes, they seemed blue and glassy, and as if fixed in their sockets ; he was evidently dying, and though I had often looked on death in hospitals, I could not stand this sight. The visitations of nature may even be more painful

to the sufferer, but there is something soothing in the idea that they are visitations of nature ; the sick one is struck down by the hand of the Deity himself ; he is only undergoing the common doom : but a violent death is always connected with the idea of crime or unusual suffering ; it is an end that might have been avoided ; and, as I gazed on this poor creature, my very heart was sick ; every thing was beginning to swim before me, when I rushed out into the open air, and even there I was forced to lean a few moments for support against the shed.

As I began to breathe more freely in the night-wind, my attention was caught by the sound of voices, and, on looking round, I saw on the shingles below, on the other side of the dyke, where the fight had first taken place, a young girl, supporting a wounded smuggler in her arms ; it was too dark to distinguish their faces with any degree of precision, but their voices soon betrayed them to me. My blood ran cold as I listened to the following short dialogue, for I was in the shadow and could not be seen by the speakers.

“Sink the customs ! It’s of no use, Nance ;

I'm fairly a-ground, and you ha'n't strength enough to shove me off again. So here then I must lie, old rotten hull as I am, till they find me, and then I swing for it."

"But try, father; only try; lean on me."

Again she endeavoured to drag or rather support the old man forwards, and her efforts were really wonderful for a creature so slim and lightly-formed. She actually succeeded in dragging him up a low bank, and even a few yards beyond it, but there her strength failed; she could go no farther, and it was only by an almost superhuman exertion that she held him from falling.

"It won't do, Nance; this shot in the thigh won't let me move an inch farther, so here I must be caught, and I suppose they'll hang me for being found in arms against the King's officers. Sink the customs! They shan't tie a noose about my neck, however. We'll blow up the ship sooner than she shall fall into the hands of the enemy. So give us a kiss, my girl—God bless you. And now—hey for Dunkirk!"

And I saw him hold a pistol to his breast,

which Nancy seized with a suppressed scream. Poor thing ! her gestures at that moment would have wrung pity from a heart of stone.

“For God’s sake, father — for your poor Nancy’s sake — there is yet hope. Some of our friends may return before the king’s-men leave the boat-house.”

“Not much likelihoods of that, Nance ; they ’ll hardly slip their own necks into a halter to save mine.”

And I stood listening to all this, like a fool ! I must have been bewildered — stunned by what had passed. But I was now awake again, and, cursing my own dullness that could waste so many precious moments, I dashed down into the dyke, waded knee-deep through the mud and water, and with no little difficulty clambered up the opposite bank, where I was instantly observed by the old smuggler.

“Sink the customs !—they are here, Nance.”

In another moment I was at his side, but in that moment the pistol was discharged, and he dropped into my arms mortally wounded, exclaiming—

“Sink the customs !—you are too late to

hang me, messmate. Nance, my girl, they cannot say your father was hanged; you're a wife now for any man—the best in the land—let him be who he will.—Sink the customs!"

" 'Tis I, Harry — your friend — George Seymour."

"What, the Master!—give us your hand, d—n you! — You're a brave lad, Master—fought better than any six of the King's blue jackets, thof it was against myself. — But, Master—"

He tried to go on, but could not, and was evidently bleeding apace internally, though one little drop of blood upon his lips was the only outward sign of injury.

"Master—you'll think of—"

Again the words were as if stifled in his breast as he pointed with a shivering hand to Nancy. But I replied to the sign, for I understood it well—too well.

"She shall not want a home, Harry, while I have one."

"God bless you, Master. Nancy, my girl, where are you?—the night grows so dark—or something is coming over my eyes—kiss me, Nance."

And Nancy moved towards him with a calmness that was truly frightful. As she stooped to kiss him, something like a smile passed over her blue lips—may I never see such a smile again!—in the same moment Harry was slightly convulsed, and with a groan that was scarcely audible he expired in my arms.

By this time the Lieutenant and his party, who had been alarmed by the report of the pistol, came up to us, and explanations were asked and given in less time than it has taken me to write, or my readers to peruse, them. Frank carefully minuted down every thing in his pocket-book, and, having given the dead body in charge to a party of his seamen, attempted, in his rude way, to comfort Nancy. The poor girl, however, was not in a state to need, or listen to, comfort; the blow had stunned her into insensibility, and there she stood a thing of life, but without its functions. After many fruitless attempts at consolation, he exclaimed in a tone that, under any other circumstances, had been ludicrous,—

“By G—d! the poor thing has gone mad or stupid! I tell you what, George, we’ll have

her home with us, and put her in Bet's hands; she's a better doctor than half our old women in the navy."

This was no sooner said than done, and without either thanks or opposition from Nancy, who seemed to have lost all powers of volition. The Lieutenant's wife, however, feeling that such a case was something beyond the usual range of her practice, begged the ship-surgeon might be sent for, and willingly sank into the subordinate situation of nurse, to the sore displeasure of Frank, who hated the very sight of a doctor. Yet neither the skill of the one, nor the more than sisterly attention of the other, availed any thing.

The morning came, and she was evidently mad; a second, and a third day followed, and still she was no better; the idea that her father lived, and was to be hanged, had got firm hold of her mind, and nothing could root it out. All we could say was in vain; she brooded on this one thought with a sullen silence, much worse than any violence of frenzy could have been; and I now began to feel myself placed in a most awkward situation by my promise, so

unwittingly given, to the father. It could not be expected that Frank would trouble himself many days longer with a maniac, and what was I to do with her? One moment I wished the poor thing might die, and in the next was angry with myself for my selfishness:—then, again, I cursed the hour that brought me on such an unlucky visit, when, as if all this was not enough, I was summoned to the coroner's inquest, sitting on the body of Henry Woodriff. I was not a little surprised at such a call, but it seems I might have spared my wonder; for, however the smugglers may perish, this ceremony is never omitted, and the inquest had already sate on the others who were found dead near the beach.

Internally vowing to leave this abominable place within the next four-and-twenty hours—never to return,—I set off in obedience to the summons of the law, and found the inquest assembled in the parlour of a little ale-house, divided only by a field from the village. Here too was Frank, with a party of his sailors, either as witnesses or accessories. The foreman of the inquest was a short stout man, with a

round face, and a short nose turned up as if in scorn of the two thick lips that opened beneath it, and a pair of yellow, flaring eyes, though destitute of all expression. He looked full of the dignity of his office, and, as I entered, was in the high tide of discussion with a stout young smuggler, who, by his tone and manner, seemed to care very little for any body present. This proved to be the son of poor Harry; and he spoke out his mind as plainly as his father would have done, though not quite so coolly.

"Then I'll be d——d if you do. Gentlemen, as you call yourselves, there's ne'er a C'towner of you all shall drive a stake through the old man's corpse, while there's a hand to this body."

"Respect the dignity of the court, young man. Your father, being *compos*, did make away with himself. I take it, gentlemen, the evidence is sufficient to that effect; but we'll presently examine Mr. Seymour—"

"My name is Seymour."

"Pray be seated, Mr. Seymour; I'll speak to you directly.—Your father, I say, being

compos, did make way with himself, and the law, in that case made and provided, says —”

“Damn the law. I say whoever runs a stake through my father’s body, I’ll send a bullet through his head. So now you all know my mind, and let him try it who likes it.”

With this he burst out of the court, to the great dismay of the foreman, who, when he recovered from his surprise, said in a tone of grave importance:—

“This is contempt of the court, and must be punished.”

The Lieutenant, however, put in his veto; for with all his roughness he did not want for feeling, and the gallantry of the young smuggler had evidently won his heart.

“Psha! the poor fellow only speaks up for his father, and he has a right to do so.”

“Yes, but with your leave, Lieutenant E——,”

“Come, come, Master Denton; I know you are too kind-hearted to hurt the lad for such a trifle.”

“Trifle! do you call it a trifle to damn the court?”

“Well, call it what you will, but let the poor fellow go scot-free. He has enough of it already, I think; his goods have been taken, his father killed, and his sister is run mad.”

“Why, as you say, Lieutenant E——, I am not hard-hearted, and—Oh, Mr. Seymour, I beg your pardon for detaining you. We want your evidence as to this business, merely as a matter of form. You were present when Harry Woodriff shot himself?—Administer the oath to Mr. Seymour.”

The oath was accordingly administered in due form, and I was reluctantly compelled to tell the whole business, which still farther authorized the little foreman in his darling scheme of burying a man in the meeting of four roads, and driving a stake through his body. I do not believe he was really of a bad disposition, but this ceremony flattered his importance, besides that it gratified the appetite for horror so common to all vulgar minds.

To have been present at such a sight, under any circumstances, would have delighted him, merely as a spectator; but to have it take place under his own immediate auspices was too

great a treat to be given up for any consideration that Frank or myself could offer. In addition to the mere pleasure of the thing itself, his persistency gave him in his own eyes all the dignity of a man resolute in the performance of his duty, however unpleasant, and in spite of the most powerful solicitations. We were, therefore, obliged to yield the point, and leave the field to the little foreman, who instantly selected half-a-dozen stout peasants to keep watch over the body.

In coming out we saw a knot of smugglers in earnest conversation at the end of the street, about fifty yards from us. Among them was young Woodriff, whose gestures spoke pretty plainly that the council was not a peaceful one, and the Lieutenant was not slow in guessing their purpose.

“Do you see them, George? just as I thought; they’ll have a haul now at the old smuggler’s body before night is over, and I’ll not stand in their way for any coroner’s quest of them all—not I. It’s no seaman’s duty to look after corpses.”

As he said this, we came close upon the little

party, who were suddenly silent, eyeing us with looks of scorn and sullen hatred, that made me expect a second fray; Frank, however, was too brave to be quarrelsome.

“You need not scowl so, lads; I have only done my duty, and mayhap I may be sorry to have it to do, but still it was my duty, and I did it, and will do it again, if the same thing happens again. But that’s neither here nor there. All I meant to say was, that I shall keep a sharp look-out on the water to-night for any boat that may be coming over; and, in case of the worst, I shall have all hands aboard. So, good bye to you.”

“The Lieutenant’s a brave fellow, after all,” said one, as we walked off.

“I never thought worse of him,” replied young Harry; “but if I find out the scoundrel who first shot my father, b——t my soul, but he’s as dead a man as any that lies in the church-yard.”

“Come on, George,” cried the Lieutenant; “if I seem to hear what these fellows say, I must notice it, and I don’t wish that, if I can help it—poor devils!”

It may be easily supposed that the day did not pass very pleasantly, with me at least, who was not used to the trade of murder, though on Frank the whole business made very little impression; he was too much accustomed to such things to be seriously affected by them, for a sailor's life is one of vicissitudes, while that of a studious man flows on so equally that a simple thunder-storm is to him a matter of excitement. My brain seemed to reel again, and I was heartily glad when eleven o'clock gave me an excuse for retiring, for I was wearied out, mind and body, and wished for nothing so much as to be alone.

It was a dark and stormy night, though as yet no rain fell; the thunder too rolled fearfully, and the lightning leaped along the waters, that were almost as black as the clouds above them. I was too weary for sleep, and, feeling no inclination to toss about for hours in bed, placed myself at the window to enjoy the sublimity of the tempest.

At any other time this splendid scene would have been delightful to me, but now it awoke none of its usual sympathies: it was in vain

that I tried to give myself up to it—my mind was out of tune for such things. Still I sat there, gazing on the sea, when my attention was diverted by a gentle tap at the door, and ere I could well answer, it swung slowly back on its hinges, and Nancy stood before me, with a lamp in one hand, and a large case-knife in the other. I thought she was asleep, for her eyes, though wide open, were fixed; and her voice, when she spoke, was subdued and broken, exactly like one who talks in his slumbers. Something, however, may be attributed to the excited state of my fancy.

“I must pass through your window—it opens upon the lawn—for the front door is locked and the key taken away by the Lieutenant, who is out at sea to-night on the watch for smugglers.”

As she muttered this indistinctly, she glided across the room to the window, and, undoing the button that held it, walked slowly out. Still impressed with the idea of her being asleep, I made no opposition, fearing that she might be seriously affected in health or mind by any sudden attempt to wake her. At the

same time I resolved not to lose sight of her, lest she should come into peril from the cliffs or the dykes, and accordingly I followed her steps at a short distance till we came to the ale-house. Late as the hour was, the people had not yet gone to bed, for lights were shining through the kitchen-window, and from the room immediately over it came the glimmer of a solitary lamp that stood on a table by the casement. Hitherto Nancy had gone on without taking the least notice of my presence, which had served to confirm me in the idea that she walked in her sleep, but now she turned round upon me—

“The Lieutenant’s wife told me truly; *he* is here; but not a word; follow me softly—as though you feared to wake the dead.”

I saw now that she was really awake, and my first impulse was either by force or persuasion to take her back. And yet to what purpose? if her madness should grow violent I could always overpower her, and at any rate we were going to, and not from, assistance. I did therefore as she bade me, and followed her in silence, while she went cautiously up to

the window, and, having examined what was passing within with all the deliberate cunning of a maniac, then gently lifted the latch of the door, which opened into a narrow brick passage to the left of the kitchen.

At the end of it was a short flight of stairs, and these led us into the room where I had before observed the lamp was burning; in the middle of the chamber was a plain deal coffin on tressels, in which lay the corpse of poor Harry, all but the face covered over with a dirty table-cloth. I now saw plainly that the peasants had held their watch below from pure fear 'of being in the same room with the dead, and a state of partial intoxication might account for their having left the door open; but to what purpose was this visit of Nancy's?—she did not long leave me in doubt.

“Now, Mr. Seymour—you call yourself my father's friend—you have eaten of his bread—will you see him hung like a thief on a gibbet?”

The strangeness of this appeal startled me so that I knew not well what to answer. She repeated the question while her eyes flashed fire : —

"Will you see him hung?—hung?—hung?—you understand that word, I suppose."

"My dear Nancy—"

"By God's light, coward, I have a mind to put this knife into you. Don't you see he is their prisoner—in chains?—And to-morrow he will be tried and hung—yes, my poor father will be hung."

And in her changing mood she wept and sobbed like an infant; this, however did not last long.

"But they shall not—no—they shall not. Here, take this knife — plunge it into him, that they may not have him alive; 'tis a hard task for a daughter, and since you are here, take it and stab him as he sleeps; mind you do not wake him though—stab home—no half-work—home to the heart—you know where it is—here—here!"

She placed my hand upon her heart as if to shew me where to strike.

I drew back, shuddering.

"Coward!—but you shall do it; it is a task of your own seeking—you came here of your own free will—I did not ask you to follow me—and you shall do it!"

I knew not what to say or do, and for a moment thought of flinging myself upon her to force away the knife, when I heard a scuffle below. A few blows were exchanged, a single pistol-shot discharged, and immediately after was the tramp of feet upon the stairs. Nancy uttered a loud shriek—

“They are here!”

Scarcely were the words uttered than she rushed up to the coffin, and ere I could prevent her, plunged the knife twice or thrice into the dead body. In the same instant the room was filled with smugglers, headed by young Woodruff, who was astonished, as well he might be, at the extraordinary scene before him.

“Mr. Seymour!—Nance too!—poor girl!—But we have no time for talking, so all hands to work, and help bear off the old man to the boat—we’ll soon have him in fifty fathoms of water, out of the reach of these b——d harpies.”

“My father!—you shall not take my father from me!” shrieked the poor maniac.

“Be quiet, Nance!—Gently, lads, down the

stair-case—look to our Nance, Mr. Seymour—
gently, lads—I'd sooner knock twenty living
men on the head than hear one blow given
to a dead one."

So saying, and having again briefly entreated
my care of his sister, he followed the corpse
out, while the unfortunate maniac, quite con-
trary to my expectations, made no farther
opposition. She leant for a time against the
window without speaking a word, and, when
I tried to persuade her to return, very calmly
replied,—“With all my heart; to what purpose
should I stay here since they have taken my
father from me? they'll hang him now, and
I cannot help it.”

“My poor girl, your father is dead.”

Nancy smiled contemptuously, and, passing
her hand across her brow as if exhausted, said,
“I am ready to faint; will you be kind enough
to fetch me a glass of water?”

She did, indeed, seem as she would drop, and
I went down into the kitchen to fetch the water.
Seven or eight smugglers were there keeping
watch over the peasants, and the sentinel, mis-
taking me for an enemy, levelled his pistol at

my head; but the priming flashed in the pan, and, before he could repeat the attack, an old man, who had often seen me with Frank, stepped between us just in good time to save me by his explanation.

Upon telling him my purpose, he directed me to the well in the yard, at the same time putting a lantern into my hand with a caution to "look to the rotten tackling,"—a caution that was not given without good reason, for the wood-work round the well was so decayed that it would scarcely bear the action of the cylinder.

In a few minutes I had drawn up the bucket, and hastened back to Nancy with a jug full of the water. To my great surprise she was gone, and I now saw—too late indeed—that her request for water was merely a trick to get rid of me, that she might the better escape, though what her farther object might be, I could not possibly divine. It was not long, however, before I learned this too; for, on looking out from the window, I saw her, with the lamp still in her hand, pushing out to sea in a small skiff, that was half afloat, and held only by a thin cable.

How she contrived to throw off the rope I know not, but she did contrive it—perhaps she had the knife with her, and cut it. Be this as it may, she was pushing off amidst the breakers that burst about her most tremendously, and kept up a most violent surf for, at least, half a mile from the shore. Was not this under the idea of rescuing her father?

In an instant I gave the alarm, and the smugglers, leaving the peasants to do their worst, hurried off with me to the beach. Nancy was now about a hundred yards from the shore in the midst of a furious surge, for, though it was too dark to see her, the glimmer of the lamp was visible every now and then as the boat rose upon the waters.

“By G—d! it’s of no use,” said the old smuggler; “no skiff can get through them breakers.”

“Well, but she has.”

“Not yet, master—see—the light’s gone—it’s all up with her now.”

The light had indeed gone, and not as before to rise again with the rise of the waters. Minute after minute elapsed, and still all was

dark upon the waves—the next morning the corse of Nancy Woodruff was found on the sands, about half a mile from the place where she had first pushed off amid the breakers.

A LEGEND
OF
NAWARTH CASTLE.

NAWARTH CASTLE stands in that part of Cumberland called Eskdale Ward. It is of great size, and built round a court of an irregular form, approaching to a square, with towers at each corner. The north side of the castle is on the brink of lofty cliffs, impending over the rapid Irthing, and the descent is beautifully clothed with wood. Its dungeons, its narrow, grated windows, its numerous chambers and stair-cases, its doors almost

cased with iron, its tapestried walls, and its oaken carvings, at once transport us to the past, and prepare the mind for a form of life totally at variance with modern habits and feelings. In the entire building may be found, distinctly marked out, the traces of different centuries; but the earliest part belongs to the ninth year of Edward the Third, when Ralph Lord Dacre obtained permission to 'castellate his mansion of Nawarth.' In his family it continued for eleven generations, till in the year 1569 the young heir was killed by a fall from a wooden horse, when his uncle Leonard seized upon the castle, but was quickly driven out by Lord Hunsdon, governor of Berwick. The possession of it was then given up to Elizabeth, Lady Dacre, the rightful inheritrix, who shortly afterwards was married to Lord William Howard, the third son of Thomas, Duke of Norfolk. In the reign of Charles II. his descendant was created Lord Dacre of Gilsland, Viscount Howard of Norfolk, and Earl of Carlisle, and from him the castle with all the family honours has been lineally transmitted to the present

possessor. Such is a brief sketch of Nawarth Castle and of its history; and, having thus mapped out the scene of action, we proceed to our legend, which, with some variations, has also been attributed to the ruins of a Roman castle in a neighbouring county.

Lord William Howard was, as the old chronicle tells us, the scourge of the moss-troopers. From his strong-hold of Nawarth Castle, he was accustomed to sally forth on every irruption of these marauders, and pursue them with fire and sword across the borders, and thus the county of Cumberland obtained a share of repose most unusual in those "good old times of rugging and reiving." But, in addition to these warlike qualities, he had one merit not quite so much in accordance with the spirit of his age; every moment of quiet, allowed to him by his troublesome neighbours, was devoted to study, a propensity so little understood by those about him that it was generally inferred he was addicted to the black art. The midnight lamp that burnt in his

almost inaccessible turret was supposed to shed its light on the unholy pages of the early necromancers. Power, and gold,—which is only another form of power,—were, of course, the objects of all this learned toil, till at last, as the story went, he forced from the reluctant spirits a discovery of their hidden treasures. But it will be requisite to go back a little, for the better understanding of our legend.

“What news, now, Leonard?” said the warder to the leader of a returning troop.

“Good—very good,”—replied the horseman as he dismounted; “we have had fine sport, and brought home a prime buck with us.”

“Sport!—buck!”—replied the warder; “I rather think your tale will find small grace with Lord William; he’ll hardly thank you for a haunch of venison, when he expects the heads of a score of moss-troopers.”

“Why that’s it, man; that’s the game I’m talking of. And if we haven’t got a score of heads, we’ve got what’s better,—the prime buck of the forest,—Johnnie Armstrong. Bring him forward, lads.”

And two of the horsemen dragged, or rather pricked, forward with their daggers' points, a tall, powerful, red-haired man, whose looks plainly told how willing he would have been to have tried conclusions with his captors, unarmed as he was, but that his hands were tightly bound behind him.

"Saint Nicholas!" exclaimed the warder, the moment he set his eyes upon him, "this is indeed a prime bit of venison. Hie you up, man, to Lord William, and tell him of your luck; it will be worth a purse of gold to you, if he doesn't happen to be in his lunes; you'll find him in his turret."

"By my faith, then," replied the horseman, "that is the very last place in the world where I like to look for him. More than once I have thought those figures carved in the black oak pannels had life in them."

"Life?" said the warder.

"Aye, life;" replied Leonard, dropping his rough voice almost to a whisper. "Often on opening the door have I heard a shuffling of feet, as if some folks were running off to hide

themselves in a hurry ; and when I entered the room the carved figures would seem bobbing in and out of the wainscot for a few seconds, and then all was still again. Then, too, those griffin heads that support the great black marble slab;—I'm no Christian if I haven't seen their jaws open, and their wings flap."

The warder, forgetting his newly acquired Protestantism in his fears, crossed himself most devoutly;—"You don't say so?"

"Indeed but I do though," responded the horseman. "However, as there's still a blink of daylight, and I love the chink of gold, as well as the bright eye of a merry lass, I'll e'en run the hazard."

Having formed this doughty resolution, he set out for the tower at the south-east angle of the castle, in which were the private apartments of Lord William. These consisted of a library, a chapel, and a bed-room, all of very small dimensions, the entrance to which was by a strong door, well secured by iron gratings and bolts. The approach, to them was through a gallery at the top of the castle on the south

side, upwards of one hundred and sixty feet in length. The chapel, or oratory, was fitted up with a plain wainscot, painted of a red colour, and ornamented with the armorial devices of the Dacre family. At the altar was a picture, on board, representing the passion and suffering of our Saviour, with inscriptions on scrolls in text hand, and the arms of Dacre quartering those of Vaux, Morvil, and Greystock.

The horseman knocked at the door, but no answer was returned.

"By my faith, then," he muttered, "but I'd rather meet a dozen moss-troopers single-handed. However, needs must when the devil drives—Heaven forgive me for talking of him in such a place!"

And again he ventured to knock. This time it was answered by a harsh, quick, "Come in," and with beating heart, he obeyed the order. Lord William sat intently occupied with a folio that lay open on the black marble slab already mentioned.

"We have caught the Armstrong," said

Leonard, finding that no notice was taken of his presence.

“Hang him!” peevishly replied Lord William, without looking from the book before him.

“As your Lordship pleases,” replied the literal trooper, and forthwith he hurried from the apartment, both as being glad to get away, and as well pleased with his commission.

The shades of evening fell deeper and deeper, till at last the letters were no longer distinguishable. Lord William closed the volume, and flung himself back in his chair in earnest meditation.

“’Tis a strange tale,” said he to himself; “and yet why should I doubt it? Things of no less marvel have been found true, though our reason is too weak to cope with them; the moon sways the tides, but whence is her influence? in what way does she work? I cannot read the mystery, yet shall I, for that, refuse to believe it? Witches have made compacts with the Evil One; they have owned it, though the confession was their death; yet I

understand it not. Well and wisely sings
the player poet—

‘There are more things in heav’n and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.’

—Yes, I will look to it this very night. It is
the full of the moon, and near upon the very
hour, when, if the tale be true, the shadow
from the old cross will fall upon the precise
spot that leads to these wondrous caverns.”

At this point, his meditations were again
interrupted by the appearance of Leonard.

“Leonard,” exclaimed Lord William, “you
come as wanted; but, hold!—your presence
reminds me of what I had well nigh forgotten.
Did you not say that you had captured Arm-
strong? I took small note of it at the time,
and yet surely you said some such thing;
or have I only fancied it?”

“It’s quite true, my lord.”

“Bring him before me then—well, what
does the fool stare at? or have you not
heard me?”

"Certainly I've heard your lordship, but—' here the horseman hesitated.

"But me no buts, sirrah. Bid the man come hither, and see that he have no concealed weapons about him; I have little mind to fall ingloriously by the knife of an assassin."

"Did your lordship say that he was to walk hither?"

"Aye, marry; what else?"

"That would be a somewhat difficult task to manage, seeing that he has been hanged for the last half hour."

"Hanged?—who has dared to order this execution?"

"Your lordship. I told you that I had caught Johnnie Armstrong, and the reply was, 'Hang him!'"

"Out upon the fool!—to take a hasty, unconscious word for a command: but it's done and can't be undone; and, after all, I shrewdly suspect he has met no worse, nor harder, fate than he deserved, though it has been measured out to him somewhat after the fashion of Lidford law. Requiescat in pace!—peace be to his soul.

And now, Leonard, I would employ thee on another matter ; get thee a shovel and pick-axe, and follow me to the field where the Weeping Cross stands ; but look you keep a close mouth ; tell nothing of my purpose to any of the castle."

A long thin shadow fell from the Weeping Cross as it glimmered in the moonlight, the extreme end of the shade resting upon a spot darker and browner than the sward around it.

"Here then," said Lord Howard, "is the place where the hidden treasure lies, or there is no truth in the divine art first taught by the eastern magi. But let me be sure that all tallies : yes, it is the eleventh hour of the night, Mars and Venus are in conjunction, and the shadow falls to the west. Dig, Leonard, here, where the ground seems as if it had been scathed by lightning. Put thy best strength to it, man, for the favourable moment will have quickly passed away ; the spirits are wakeful and grudging guardians of the gold that is entrusted to their care, and few, as well as brief, are the moments, when the art of man, even the wisest, can hope to mate them."

Under the immediate influence of curiosity, and awe for his master, Leonard set to work with right good will, and, the soil being light and loose, he had soon got to a tolerable depth. In the meantime, Lord William, leaning on his sheathed sword, looked out earnestly upon the stars, and as he read the open volume of the heavens, his eye saddened, and his brow grew darker. "All things," he said, "consent to a favourable end; and yet I like not the angry gleam about mine own natal star; never did its fires burn so redly as they do to-night; I like it not."

His meditations were fearfully interrupted by a loud cry from Leonard, who seemed to be swallowed up by the opening earth. In removing the soil hastily, he had broken into some cavern below, and in all probability been killed by the fall, for no answer was returned to the anxious call of his master. With more caution, and better success, Lord William made his way down the rugged steps which had been laid bare by the spade of his vassal, and on reaching the bottom found himself

in a cavern which, from the echoes sent back as he called on the trooper, must have been of enormous extent.

On, and on, he went, till the faint gleam of light that had poured through the opening was entirely lost, and he found himself in utter darkness. At length his farther progress was impeded by what appeared, from the touch, a solid wall of rock; to assure himself of the fact, he struck against it with the hilt of his sword, but the dull, heavy sound, betrayed no signs of any cavity beyond. Still he felt convinced that this was but the ante-room, as it were, to the treasure-chamber. Feeling his way therefore along the wall, he struck it once and twice, in the hope of discovering some secret mode of communication. At the third blow, the secret seat of the mystery revealed itself. There was a tremendous jarring, as of iron doors revolving rustily on their hinges; and a second cavern, with all its wonders, lay open to his astonished gaze.

By the light of a blazing fire, he saw a king and queen asleep in regal state amidst their

courtiers, all of whom, like themselves, were buried in magic slumber; round the fire slept seven faithful dogs, and on a table near lay a sword and a horn. The weapon, from the richness of its hilt, and its peculiar construction, attracted his attention beyond all the other wonders of the cavern, though the walls seemed to be of the purest gold, and the roof was spangled with diamonds as large, and as thickly set, as the stars that fill the heavens on a frosty night. "A sword like to this have I never seen," he exclaimed, "in the hands of Moor or Christian; if the temper of the blade be as true as the sheath is beautiful, it must be indeed a weapon for a soldier."

Thus saying, he partly unsheathed the sword, when a flash of light suddenly shot forth, and darted, as if it had been lightning, through the cavern.

As the blaze passed over the sleepers' faces, it broke the magic slumber of centuries; all started up at once, and, opening their eyes, fixed a cold unearthly gaze upon the disturber of their rest, but in that gaze there was no life;

not a limb stirred; not a lip moved. Even the stout heart of Lord William quailed for a moment, when he found, turn whichever way he would, he was met by thousands of these same glassy eyes, staring from faces of ghastly whiteness, while the livid hue was upon their lips, as if they had been breathed upon by death.

Almost unconsciously he returned the sword to its scabbard. Instantly a loud wail smote upon his ear, and made the blood run yet colder in his veins; the sleeping monarch raised his hand with a threatening gesture; his mouth was unsealed; he spoke—

“A curse upon thee, coward! better had it been thou hadst ne’er been born. Why didst not thou draw forth the sword? then had this sleep not been broken, and thou hadst been wealthy amongst the wealthiest; mighty amongst the mightiest. Now, a century must pass away ere mortal foot can again tread these caverns.”

The last words were scarcely spoken, when all the sleepers again fell back upon their

couches, with closed eyes; the fire suddenly flashed away into darkness, and a rushing whirlwind filled the cavern, and bore Lord William on its wings into the moonlight.

Many were his efforts, at the return of day, to discover the cavern of the sleepers, but though he caused the earth to be dug widely, and deeply, still no discovery followed, till at last a mighty rush of water, which even in the present day forms a sort of lake, made all farther efforts fruitless.

END OF VOL. II.

J. BENSLEY, PRINTER, WOKING.

THE LAST BALL;

AND

OTHER TALES,

BY GEORGE SOANE, B.A.,

AUTHOR OF "PROLOGUE OF PUCK," "INNKEEPER'S DAUGHTER," ETC.

"If thou be a severe, sour-complexioned man, then I here
disallow thee to be a competent judge."

ISAAC WALTON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:
EDWARD CHURTON, 26, HOLLES STREET.

1843.

J. BENSLEY, PRINTER, WOLING.

FRIAR BACON'S KEY.

"THERE are two modes, in the present day, by which any one may get the name of a liberal man, and, in the lottery of good things, I know few reputations more profitable. Be what you please, or do what you please, it matters little, so long as you have a character for generosity. This single virtue, or, what will do just as well, the appearance of it, will stand you in the stead of all the other virtues; it is a cloak to cover inward nakedness, an umbrella to keep off the pitiless pelting of the storm when it is pouring

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somewhat too freely on the head of unworthiness. In short, what is it not, in the way of profit or defence, to the fortunate possessor? Nor is the obtaining of it, by any means, as I have said, a difficult task to him who has a purse, the roads to it being an hundred fold—among the best, say, subscribing to some fund, where the money is not wanted; or purchasing, at an enormous price, some works of art that you don't understand or care about, and setting up a museum. As to your children or relations, if you happen to have any, you need not waste a thought upon them; for, as all you may do on their account is no more than what you *ought* to do, it cannot redound to the praise of your liberality; and, therefore, you may as well leave it undone."

Such was the advice of my friend Dives; and, as it happened to chime in with my own notions of the truth, I resolved to send my poor relations to the devil, or to any one else who might think proper to take them in, while, in the meantime, I opened my *collecting* campaign in a celebrated auction-room at the west-end of the town. The object I had

selected for the foundation of my new character as a man of *vertù*, was a Venus or a Hercules, that Mr. C—— had to sell—the antiquarians could not decide which of the two characters above named properly belonged to it; and no wonder, seeing that the god or goddess had been by time and accidents so reduced and shorn of his or her original proportions as to bear no bad resemblance to a mile-stone, saving only in its material, which, I can vouch, without being a connoisseur, to have been genuine marble. Such as it was, however, the fame of this mutilated sculpture had roused the whole body of antiquarians, equestrian and pedestrian, amateurs and professors. Anxious, at least, to be able to say I had bid for such a rarity, even though I should fail to win it, for want of that species of courage which, I opine, is the highest of all courage, namely, the courage to part with one's money, I hurried to the auction-room at an early hour, and found the orator already in his rostrum, and holding forth, with much eloquence and learning, upon a very equivocal as well as humble article. What that article was, I must not venture to say,

wanting the speaker's exquisite powers of periphrasis, which enabled him at once to veil and elevate a subject, that, to speak the truth, stood in need both of one assistance and the other. Indeed, as my friend Dives remarked to me in a whisper, the dapper, smooth-chinned gentleman, with his starched collar, his oily tongue, and still more oily face, looked the very genius of crockery, the born Apollo of Delf and China-ware. But my mind was bent on higher matters, namely, on the Venus or Hercules, and I soon grew heartily sick of the tropes and similes that buzzed about my ears like so many May-chaffers on a warm summer's evening. All the bidding and battling previous to the struggle for the precious statue appeared as so much tedious prologue to the grand drama, or as skirmishing by way of prelude to the grand engagement. But still, in spite of my disregard or contempt, I grew out of patience as the delay continued. First I tried my snuff-box; next I beat the devil's tattoo with my feet; next I grew hot; then hotter; then boiling hot; then red-hot—till by the time the orator had come to lot ninety-

seven, *an antique key*, the fever had exhausted me, and the previous tension of the nerves was succeeded by a gentle inclination to drowsiness, which was only at all resisted or kept back by the unaccountable interest I all at once seemed to take in this queer looking bit of old iron. It was rudely formed, and green as the copper sheathing of a vessel after a twelvemonth's voyage—nothing more in fact than an old-fashioned massive key with a sliding ring in place of the fixed one that crowns the modern handle. But for all this I could not help listening as the price rose, and, what was worse, could not refrain from bidding, though every "I thank you, Sir," of the auctioneer sounded in my ears marvellously like, "well-nibbled, gudgeon; take another snap, fool; the hook is not well in your gullet yet!"

"Gentlemen," said the orator, "this key is—a key—I mean a key *katexochen*—that is, ladies, *par excellence*,—the key of keys,—it can be traced up into the possession of the celebrated Friar Bacon, the inventor of gunpowder. Look at it, ladies and gentlemen,—smell it,—taste it." Here Mr. Fudge suited

the action to the word, and, licking his lips, went on with an air of ineffable relish—"Excellent! I protest it has the true antique relish—none of your modern rust, but the genuine ærugo of the olden time. No one can be deceived in that matter."

"But are you quite sure it belonged to Friar Bacon?" asked a little, limping antiquarian, who looked amongst men much as a turnspit does amongst dogs—"But are you quite sure?"

"*Terque quaterque*," replied the orator.

"Because I don't buy for myself; I am only the lion's jackall, you know.—Ha! ha!"

"His jack-ass, rather," muttered a young man, who stood between me and the limping querist.

"You may rely upon its being genuine," continued the orator, seeing the little man still hesitate, though half convinced by the Latin which he did not understand, and by his own joke of the jackall—"you may rely upon its being very genuine. Allow me to say five guineas, just to begin with, though, I trust, we shall not stop short of a hundred."

The little man nodded.

"Thank you, Sir," said the orator, bowing.—"Five guineas, gentlemen, are bid for this rare piece of antiquity, this gem that has existed almost three hundred years."

"Nearer six," cried my young neighbour,— "that is, if it belonged, as you say it did, to Roger Bacon, the monk of Brazen-nose."

Mr. Fudge coloured up to his eyes at this unsolicited correction of his chronology; but, as it was his business to buy golden opinions of all men, he replied, with a bow and a smile—the two usual adjuncts, by the way, of all his replies—"Much obliged to you, Sir, for the correction—Six hundred years old.—Will no lady or gentleman say any thing?—Going for five guineas.—Really it is a mere giving away of this valuable relic.—'Six,'—Thank you, Sir,—'Eight—Ten—Twenty—Twenty-five. Twenty-five guineas are bid for Friar Bacon's key.—Going,—going,—going for only twenty-five guineas, and the treasure perfectly unique!—a rarity that has not its parallel!—We may suppose that this was the key of the monk's sanctum,—why should it not be?—of that celebrated chamber, of which the legend says

it is to stand till entered by a greater scholar than Bacon, when it is to fall on the devoted head of the student, and crush it for too much learning."

"Egad! Fudge goes beyond himself to-day," whispered Dives. "Was not that last a glorious bit of the sublime?"

"Magnificent!" I said, and so loudly that the orator overheard me, and replied to the compliment, as if to a bidding, with his customary, "Much obliged, Sir.—Twenty-five guineas.—Going, for the last time, and the relic six hundred years old! Here is a gentleman vouches for its being six hundred years old."

"I vouch for no such thing," said my young neighbour, "I only answer for the friar's having been dead that time."

"Thank you, Sir,—much obliged for the correction," replied the smooth Mr. Fudge, who seemed as little able to travel out of his set phrases as a horse to step beyond his tether.—"Thirty, — forty, — fifty, — pray, be speedy, gentlemen, for we have a host of treasures to get through. In one minute, *jacta est*

alea, the die is cast. Going for fifty guineas—gone——.”

It was to myself that the key was knocked down at this enormous price, though why I had bid so much, or why I had bid for it at all, was a mystery past my own comprehension. I seemed to be acting under the power of some influence from without, independent of my own thoughts or my own volition. The key, however, was mine, and, being mine, I resolved to put a good face on the business, and elevate its worth in the eyes of others, whatever I might think of it myself. Accordingly I handled my bargain with as much reverence as if it had been the purest gold instead of a piece of green rust-eaten iron, throwing into my face a certain imposing air of mystery, which seemed to say, “There is more in this, my merry masters, than you have the wit to fancy.”

Whether I succeeded or not in persuading any one else by this manoeuvre, is more than I can pretend to say, but that I persuaded myself of it—strange as this will appear—is quite certain. The longer I examined my prize

the deeper became my conviction that there was something in it, if I could only find out what that something was. But *there* was the difficulty, the *pons asinorum*, or asses' bridge, which I could not contrive to get over, turn it which way I would. In short, I was much in the same plight with my friar's key, that a savage of Otaheite would be, or rather would have been some years ago—he is wiser now,—with a magic lantern, or a Dollond's microscope,—good things enough in their way, if you only happen to know how to use them.

I fancy what I felt upon this occasion must have been expressed in my face, for the young man at my left hand, who had been at such pains to correct the orator's chronology, adding three hundred and odd years to the time since Roger Bacon had flourished at Brazen Nose, now stepped up to enlighten me.

"You have got a prize, Sir," he said, "though you must excuse me if I suspect you are not acquainted with its value."

"That is to say," I replied, "you think yourself the better antiquarian."

"I do not profess to be an antiquarian at all," said the young man, "and, if your pur-

chase had no other value than its age, it would be in my eyes but a sorry bargain."

"And what other value can it have?" I exclaimed. "Why, if the old friar himself were alive again, with all his art magic to help him, I doubt if he could find any thing in this key beyond a piece of rusty iron."

"Why then, Sir, your bargain has been a sorry one. But you are wrong. The key has an intrinsic value, such as no antiquarian would have discovered, had he pored over it for a hundred years in the way he usually considers such things. If you will dine with me when all is over,—for this is not the fittest place to talk of these matters,—I will show you how this little piece of iron, if wisely used, may be worth to you more gold——"

"More than I have paid?"

"More than is in the exchequer of princes."

Being somewhat of a saturnine temper, I have an antipathy to all jokes, whether practical or otherwise, and this wore the face of a very impudent one, yet I actually accepted his invitation. It is true, the young man had not the appearance of a joker; on the contrary, his aspect, both from its longitude and lugu-

briousness was such as a professional mourner (where such artists are in request) would have deemed a fortune. And this, with a strong mixture of curiosity on my part, determined me to run all the peril of a hoax, the thing on earth I usually most dreaded, even beyond a mad dog or a lawyer.

I pass over the rest of the auction, which had now little interest for me, not excepting even the Venus, for a Venus Mr. Fudge pronounced the stone to be; and, if some people were right in their surmises, he had better reason than any one to be positive on the subject, having himself, as they said, superintended the manufacture of the deity. I thought no longer of any thing but my meeting with the young man at the coffee-house he had named, and the explanation that was to grow out of it. When the time *did* come, Heaven and earth! how tedious did the dinner seem! it appeared to my fancy as if it would never be over, so monstrous was the appetite of my host or guest, or so enormous was it made by my impatience. But as all earthly things must have an end, so had our meal. The last

plate was cleared away, the last crumb swept from the cloth, the cloth itself borne off under the arm of the waiter, and a magnum of port wine placed between us, with the remains of a bottle of sherry from the dinner. Now it was that I ventured to speak out plainly on the subject, to which hitherto he had not made the slightest allusion; and, at my first question, "What were the hidden virtues of the key he had so much vaunted?" the whole man was immediately changed, as if I had touched him with the spear of Ithuriel!

"Sir," he said, "I am here to answer your question, and I will answer it; but it is right I warn you beforehand that my discourse will include things scarcely credible to men of this unbelieving age."

"Why, truly," I replied, "we have not such an excellent capacity of belief as our forefathers had, but still we can do pretty well too upon occasion."

"Yes," said my guest, with a sneer; "you do not believe in ghosts—scarcely in a devil—but you do believe that a man's mental and moral qualities are regulated by the bumps on his skull; you do believe that ice ceases to be

ice at the pole, and are even beginning to doubt shrewdly, whether you have souls, thus voluntarily abasing yourself from your high rank, as things of immortal life, to the level of the brute beast. But let that pass,—it concerns me not—and let me tell you in what consists the real value of that seemingly so worthless piece of iron.”

“You would oblige me,” I replied, “beyond measure. I am all impatience to hear the secret; and as to the matter of belief, you will not, I fancy, find me a very hard customer, provided your goods wear any thing like the market stamp upon them.”

“But they do not wear the market-stamp,” said my guest, in that low, emphatic tone, which strikes with such miraculous distinctness on the tympanum of an eager listener; “my tale is strange, beyond the strangest wonder, that science or history has yet recorded.”

I was ready to burst with curiosity!

“This little piece of green rusty iron,” he went on, “that, to judge from outward appearance, is hardly worth the trouble of picking from the ground, is—”

He paused again, and sipped his wine. In

my heart I wished the port could be changed into salt and water ; but I took care not to offend him by communicating this opinion.

“ This key—and there are others, though not many, like it—commands the entrance to the central gardens of the earth ; for this world is not quite what philosophers in their conceit have imagined it to be. If you have the courage to dare so far, in one hour you may be where gold and diamonds grow as thickly, aye, ten times more thickly, than the daisies in a summer meadow—only do not you, like Hylas of old, leave the water untasted, and your pitcher unfilled, to go in quest of butterflies.”

Here he paused again, with a look that seemed to say—“ do you believe me ? ” and for my part I did not see any occasion to tell him it was a lie ; it would not have been polite to one who carried, as he did, a stout oak cudgel, and looked as if he knew how to use it. So I contented myself with observing — “ If this story be true—and I don't take upon myself to say it is not—there must be some devilry at the bottom of it—some old signing of bonds in one's own blood—conveying a soul or so over to the gentleman in black.”

"You are a fool," replied my guest, tartly; "nothing more is required to the great end than courage to gain, and industry to gather. If you have these, you have all, and nothing will be demanded of you in return, though you should carry off a cart-load of treasure."

"But my worthy counsellor in the art diabolic—for I must yet affirm, in spite of all you say, this has a strong relish of diabolus in it—"

"I tell you no!" interrupted my guest, vehemently.

"Don't be angry for the matter," I said; "it is not worth it. But you must yourself own that, if this key were the key of Paradise, it would be of marvellous little use to me, unless I knew where to find the gate it was intended to open."

"You speak well," he replied, pushing aside his glass, and taking out his watch—"the very time! day has just begun there. Follow me."

"You forget our account, here; let us ring for the waiter first."

"It is not needed; he is paid already."

"If that be the case, there is nothing more to be said, and I am at your service."

And off we set, arm-in-arm, diving through sundry blind alleys and crooked lanes, conspicuous alike for dirt and ragged children, till we at last emerged upon a wide street, that was as strange to me as if it had been one of the high-ways of ancient Babylon. In the middle stood a solitary hackney-coach, with a pair of huge grey horses, or rather living skeletons of horses, for the celebrated "*anatomie vivante*" had not a better claim to the title than those semi-transparent animals; it was a marvel to me how they held together at all, and still more how they contrived to carry such long, handsome tails, which might have become the charger of a life-guardsmen.

On the box of the said coach sat a tall lean negro, well worthy to be the driver of such cattle. He had on a high, steeple-crowned hat, like those worn by the members of "*Praise-God-Barebone's*" parliament, grey boots, grey pantaloons, that, to use the ostler's phrase, were "spick and span new," and his beard, also, was grey, not as in old age, with a silver tint, but approaching the colour of ashes; and, that nothing might be wanting to make a complete

grey man of him, he wore a cloak of the same complexion. In my life I had never seen a more droll-looking Jehu.

“Co-ach-man! — co-ach-man!” called my new friend, dwelling on every syllable as if he had got the asthma—“Coa-ach-man!”

The grey man flourished his whip with a knowing wink, and a nod of the head, as much as to say, “I understand,” and drove up to us in grand style, not leaving a hair’s-breadth between his wheel and the curb-stone. In a second he had dismounted; slap went down the steps, and I found myself handed into the carriage almost before I was aware of it.

“Good evening, and a lucky journey to you,” said my friend; “though you will find it morning where you are going.”

The grey man hastily packed up the steps again, and slammed the door to.

“But, my excellent monitor,” I exclaimed, “will not you—— stop, coachman, stop, I tell you!”—the rascal had one foot on the wheel already—“but, my very worthy counsellor, are not you going with me?”

“No occasion,” he replied; “old Harry

knows where to drive you to. He has gone with many before on the same road."

"Aye, aye, master," said the grey man; "I know the road well enough. It's a half-crown fare when I carry a mean one, and a good four shillings-worth when a gentleman steps into my coach."

I would have protested against venturing upon so singular a journey, unless accompanied by the proposer of it, but all my remonstrances were effectually drowned in the clatter of the coach, which now set off at a rate that I had not expected from the lean condition of the cattle. The pavement struck a continued stream of fire from their shoes, as we flew along through street after street, all apparently deserted, and all equally unknown to me, though, till this time, I had flattered myself there was not a single corner of London with which I was not as well acquainted as the horse of a doctor in high practice.

A four-shilling fare!—the grey man had done himself less than justice; we had already travelled over ground to three times that

amount, and were now clear of the city, clattering like mad down a steep hill, that led of course somewhere, though where I could not imagine. The farther we went, the higher grew the walls of earth on either side of the road, till at last, their height was such as completely to exclude the light of day. Before and behind me was night, yet still we flew on—on—on—on—till I began to think I had realized, in my own person, the idea of perpetual motion, and was destined to whirl along for the rest of my life like a comet revolving in its orbit. But herein I was happily mistaken. We did at last stop before an immense pair of folding doors, of brass or some heavy metal, let into the solid rock, which latter was scarped out into the form of an arch. Above this stood two colossal figures, each holding in its brazen grasp a chafing dish, full of live embers, that threw a lurid light for a few yards round, just sufficient to show the inscription over it—"CARPE DIEM."

This little memorandum gave me no particular encouragement to proceed, but the grey man was not a person to allow any one too

much time for reflection. With his usual expedition, he had handed me out of the coach, received his fare, and again mounted his box, before I had well made up my mind what to do.

"Stop a moment, coachman," I exclaimed, as he took up his whip, and was about to give it the preparatory flourish—"just stop for a minute or so! Stop! I say—I have a mind to go back with you."

"But I have no mind that you should. Tchick! tchick—gee up, lads!" He was gone.

What was to be done now? I might as well go on, since it seemed there was no way of getting back, at least for the present, so I applied my rusty old key to the ponderous lock before me, not a little doubtful though of the result, when, to my great surprise, it not only fitted exactly, but at the first touch of it the bolt shot from its fastening. The doors then swung slowly on their hinges, as if impelled by some invisible hand, and showed me a spacious hall of white marble, supported by columns of the same, and with windows,

that, from the light streaming upon the pavement, must open into day, though all behind me, for many a mile, was utter darkness. I had little hesitation in entering a place of such fair promise, when the gates again closed after me, as they had opened, of their own accord; but this gave me little trouble, as I had carefully retained the key, and had, therefore, no occasion to fear being detained against my will.

Boldly passing on through this noble hall, I suddenly found myself in a world—for I may call a space so limitless a world—that fairly struck me dumb with wonder. Above me was a crystal sky, brilliant with excess of light, although it had neither sun, nor moon, nor stars, nor any other visible source of so much splendour. Before me, and on both sides, as far as the eye could reach, was hill after hill, valley after valley, the soil of which was gold-dust,—the rocks, gold,—and the stones, thickly set in it, diamonds, emeralds, rubies, and all those gems to which the fancy of man has given an estimation.

Thousands of human beings were busy, in all

directions, with shovel and pick-axe, sweeping up the yellow dust, or rending the jewels from their beds of gold; and, indeed, the work must have been carried on for ages, for the ground was full of immense cavities, that appeared to have resulted from the mining after the treasures imbedded in it. Of the multitudes thus employed, some were young, and others old, but by far the greater part were no less burthened by their years than by the riches they had collected and stowed away in their pockets, to the great increase of their persons.

What was still more singular, the aged were infinitely the most industrious. They scarcely allowed themselves time to eat or drink, so intent were they in adding to their loads, even when they were sinking under them; but the young, with a few exceptions only, took the matter much more easily; they would frequently leave a ruby or a sapphire ungathered, after they had nearly detached it from the rock, and leave some crafty old fellow to reap the benefit of their labour, while they stepped aside for no other purpose than to pluck some new flower that grew near them, or to indulge in

the fruit, which, it must be owned, looked most delicious.

While I was admiring this novel sight, with no little inclination to join in a labour so agreeable, I was accosted by a dark, portly man, who in dress and figure strongly resembled a Dutch burgomaster, when Holland was under the rule of Spaniards. In his right hand he carried a substantial cane, headed with ivory, such as rich men of a certain age are in the habit of carrying, more as a prop to their dignity than to their limbs. Though not so fat as a London alderman in full perfection, he yet had a waist of comfortable dimensions, which, as he was of the tallest, did not show so much amiss; and, indeed, he had no want of dignity, though it was not precisely of that kind which assimilates with the received notions of a king or of a hero. He was too homely for the one character, and too fat for the other; for, notwithstanding the example of Napoleon, there is something peculiarly incongruous in the idea of a great waist and a great man. His complexion, however, was all that a novelist could wish for in his hero, being so dark that it might

well be called olive, and his dress was a rich, but sober-coloured, Spanish habit ; so that, altogether, he had the appearance of a merchant of the olden time, when merchants were princes.

"Well, Sir," said this portly figure, laying his hand condescendingly upon my shoulder—"you are come, like the rest of them, to see what you can pick up in my gardens."

I thought it best not to tell a lie for the matter—that is, not a direct lie—for he had a terrible eye under his bushy brows ; so I treated his question half in joke, half in earnest, saying that I might, perhaps, be tempted to pick up a few handfuls of dust, or some half-score of jewels, if I could be well assured that there were no steel traps or spring-guns set in his premises.

"For what do you take me?" said the portly gentleman, frowning.

"For the owner of this splendid estate," I replied, with a conciliatory bow.

"You are right," he said ; "I am so ; and, if it were only for that word, you may gather a cart-load of diamonds, or gold, or whatever

else happens best to suit your fancy. How say you, friend: have you a mind to this gear?"

"Nothing," I replied, "would please me better—though—" for I did not yet feel convinced he was in earnest—"though I can hardly reconcile it to my conscience to rob you of such precious treasures."

"Treasures, quotha! Aye, that is one of the many fancies of you simple folks of the upper earth. But think so still for me; I shall the sooner get rid of the rubbish, which lies more thickly on the land than is like to be good for my fruit trees. Here!—Goblinet!"

The being thus summoned, and who hastened to us at the call, was, as I imagined, a gnome, and this the kingdom of the gnomes, though, I must confess, the appearance of the portly gentleman was not that of a ruler of spirits. Goblinet, however, with his yellow face and long muscular arms, fully justified my suspicion.

"Goblinet," said the portly gentleman, "give this honest man a spade and pick-axe; he has taken a fancy to help in clearing off the stones for you."

"I am glad to hear it, master," said the gnome, "for they lie thicker this year than ever; for my part, I think they must grow like the carrots and turnips, only it may be not quite so fast."

"Bad philosophy, Goblinet," replied his master; "but give my friend here his tools, and e'en let him set to work as soon as he pleases."

I was accordingly furnished with the requisite implements, and was trotting off in a violent hurry to a very promising mass of rock, in which the diamonds were stuck like pins in a toilette cushion, when the portly gentleman again laid his hand upon my shoulder.

"Hark ye a moment, mine honest friend—there is yet one thing for you to learn—one little condition, before you begin your operations, for I like to deal on the square with the folks who come here."

My countenance fell in an instant. I thought directly of the devil and his old tricks, and had scarcely courage to falter out,—“Pray, Sir, what is this condition?”

“Oh, no great matter; it is only that folks

are allowed but a single day in my grounds. Work away, therefore, as hard as you please till nightfall; dig gold and diamonds, or gather the fruits from the trees, or sit still without doing any thing, just as you think proper; it is all the same to me. But, remember, when you see the crystal above you clouded with a grey tint, as if a veil had been drawn over it, then is our twilight, and, hard upon that, follows darkness, when you are like to be turned out, if you stay so long, with certain disagreeable accompaniments. I tell you this, that you may make the best use of your time, and not blame me afterwards if you should find your labour has been great and your pleasure little."

Thus saying, the portly gentleman strode off, with a patronizing nod, followed by Goblinet, who turned back from time to time, mocking at me with his long yellow hands, and chuckling with delight, as if he had some pleasant piece of mischief in view—pleasant, I mean, to himself—for I did not suspect him of too much good-nature. I had, however, little leisure to think of him. There were diamonds to be dug, and fruit to be gathered, for my mind was made

up to neglect neither, though, as a prudent man, I resolved not to tickle my appetite till I had collected an ample supply of gold and precious stones. Even if this should occupy the day, what would that matter? when the twilight came on, it would be time enough to think of indulging myself—though, truth to say, the fruit looked tempting beyond measure, and the single taste I ventured on, by way of experiment, had a surpassing relish with it, that almost upset my resolution.

Such was the profusion of precious stones, glittering from the rocks on all sides, that I calculated on digging out as many as I could possibly want long before the darkness. But this was a grievous mistake, as I soon found out when I actually set to work. The greater part of the diamonds grew on the steep sides of precipices, not to be climbed without infinite peril to my neck; and those that were more within reach lay imbedded in rock that was harder than the hardest granite. Not that these difficulties deterred me from the labour; so far from it, I toiled with unabated diligence hour after hour, neglecting the delicious fruits

which seemed ready to drop into my mouth, and, by the time of twilight, had got together a tolerable parcel of the largest diamonds—not to speak of topazes, emeralds, and gold-dust. Even then I thought I might as well continue my work a little longer. The evening had, it is true, thrown a grey veil over the crystal sky; but who could say how long such a twilight would last? it might, for aught I knew, endure for hours; so that there would be still time to sit down and enjoy myself. On, therefore, I went, most gallantly, with spade and pick-axe, digging and hammering, rending and gathering, till I could absolutely work no longer; indeed, I could scarcely move hand or foot; the sky, too, grew darker and darker; and I began to think it would be as well to rest contented with what I had got, and enjoy myself while there was any twilight remaining. But here again I had reckoned without my host, or rather my passion for gold and diamonds had blinded me to all other considerations. Having wasted the day in such excessive toil, I was almost too weary to gather the fruit; and, when I did reach any, the same

feeling of fatigue rendered me incapable of enjoying it.

Night now unfolded her wings, and sank down in darkness upon the earth, like a vulture overshadowing the prey it has struck; and a deep bell, that seemed to be tolled in the very centre of the earth, sent a heavy summons to all that the day was over. At this signal, the plains and hills suddenly swarmed with gnomes, in face and figure the exact prototypes of Goblinet, if indeed they did not—many of them, at least—deserve the palm of superior ugliness. These ferocious monsters were armed with whips, which they cracked with high glee about the ears of those who, like myself, had loitered to this late hour, driving us forward, as if we had been a flock of sheep, to the great hall. Wearied as I was, and with such beagles close upon my heels, it is no wonder that by degrees I lost the whole of the precious burthen I had toiled so hard for. Diamond dropped after diamond, emerald after emerald, and, if I paused for an instant to pick up the fallen treasure, the lash of the gnomes soon reminded me that time was no longer at my own disposal.

Indeed, I was often glad, when we came on the more broken parts of the ground, to fling away a portion of my load, dear as it was to me, that I might get on the more easily; and thus, in one way or the other, by the time I reached the hall, I had not a single sample left of all my treasure.

There was no occasion for the key to let me out; the great folding-doors now stood wide open, the gnomes smacking their whips behind us, and the road before us being covered with vehicles of all kinds, from the proud coach and six, through all the intermediate degrees of carriage and pair, demi-fortune, and gig, down to the humble hackney. Vexed beyond measure at my own folly in having thus wasted the whole day in fruitless toil, instead of enjoying myself, I jumped into the first vacant coach, and, holding out a crown-piece to the driver, bade him drive like fury. He took me at my word. Off we set at full gallop, with as little regard to our necks as might be; and as many of my neighbours, probably under the influence of the same feelings, were going at the same rate, I had no right to wonder at our vehicles

coming in collision. Off flew the wheel, down smashed the coach; and I was thrown upon the hard road with so much violence that—it awoke me! I was still in the auction-room, where, thanks to the eloquence of Mr. Fudge, I had been comfortably asleep for the last two hours. The Venus or Hercules was going. “Nine hundred and eighty guineas are bid for this magnificent torso.” — “One thousand!” I cried.—“Thank you, Sir.—Going for one thousand guineas—gone!”

THE SINGULAR TRIAL
OF
FRANCIS ORMISTON.

THE following simple narrative may, perhaps, with some readers, excite a deeper interest than many of the high-wrought fictions of romance. For myself, I can only say that it affected me more strongly at the time of its occurrence, and, indeed, for many weeks afterwards, than any details of my reading, or of my actual experience. As a near relation of the principal agent in this tragedy is still surviving, I shall adopt fictitious names, that the peace of the

living may not be disturbed by the crimes or calamities of the dead.

It was the day before the assizes at D——. Being at that time a briefless barrister, and having an old college chum in the town, I thought this would be a favourable opportunity for paying him a visit ; and accordingly, leaving my learned friends, as we lawyers somewhat facetiously call each other, to their own pleasant society, I betook myself to the house of Mr. Hammond. Here I was received with that warm hospitality which, in the present day, at least, seems to be almost confined to those who have become attached to each other by early associations ; and, by a fortunate chance, two distant relations of my host happened to drop in at the same instant. Out of compliment to me they were invited to stay and dine with us. The one, Mr. Forest, was a physician of some eminence and yet greater talent ; the other, whose name was Elton, was a banker—a shrewd, hard-featured man, not very likely to commit or to forgive an error, and in all respects the very reverse of my host, who was a wit, overflowing with spirits and good humour. I never

remember to have seen him angry, except once, and then it was with a knavish groom for defrauding a superannuated old hunter of his oats, and spending the produce at the public-house. "Had the scoundrel only robbed myself," Charles would say, "I could have forgiven him; but to cheat poor old Nimrod of his dinner, that he might deluge his own stomach with fat ale—oh! it's felony without benefit of clergy; I had half a mind to apply the rope to the fellow's neck, instead of his shoulders."

After dinner, the bottle circulated freely; and the conversation turned upon the approaching trials. The physician observed that the calendar was unusually heavy.

"Yes," said the banker; "nine or ten, at least, may reckon upon a halter."

"Why, I'm not quite so sure of that," replied Charles, winking at me; "if, indeed, you were on the bench, friend Elton, we might stand some chance of using up our superfluous roguery, to the great encouragement of hemp and the hangman."

"You are right," said the banker—"quite

right; I have no idea of that false humanity, which spares a rogue to the injury of his better-disposed neighbours."

"My dear fellow," cried Charles, "never use that word, humanity; the moment you talk of it, by an unlucky association of ideas I always think of ropes and whipping-posts. As for me——"

"Oh, as for you," interrupted the banker, "you are the grand patron of all the rogues in and about the town of D——. It would not at all surprise me to hear of your drawing up a petition in favour of that arch robber and blood-thirsty murderer, Francis Ormiston, though his guilt is so evident that no lawyer can be found to undertake his cause."

"Tut tut," said Charles hastily, "no lawyer would refuse a fee, though Satan himself were to be the client."

"I beg to put in a demurrer," said I.

"Wait till he tries you," replied Charles; "only wait till old Sooterkin tries you. But as touching this poor fellow, Frank Ormiston, I suspect he is in straitened circumstances, which may very well account for his employing no counsel."

"If it be so, I am glad of it with all my heart," said the banker; "many a scoundrel before him has escaped by the quirks and quibbles of a clever lawyer."

"Folks do say," replied Charles drily, "that the lawyers are something like physicians, and kill full as many as they save."

"You know nothing, then, of the prisoner?" I asked, willing to anticipate the angry remark which, I saw, was quivering on the lips of the inflexible banker.

"How the deuce should I!" replied Charles; "he lived in a little cottage, the doors of which were as hermetically sealed against all intruders as if it had been the mosque of St. Sophia, and we a set of infidels. By the by, that very circumstance is likely to help him up the gallows: as nobody knows any thing of him, every body is prepared to think and say the worst."

"A very just conclusion," said the banker.

"Yes," said Charles, "for that worthy old judge of the infernals, Rhadamanthus, to come to, who, according to the heathen poet, '*Castigat, auditque dolos, subigitque fateri*,'—that is, he first punishes, and then compels them to

confess.—But come, Ewart,”—turning to me, —“I always promised, when we were at Pembroke, that I would give you your first brief, and as—the heavens be praised therefore!—I have no lawsuits of my own, you shall undertake this for me; and mind you do your best, for I really am interested about the poor fellow.”

“No doubt,” observed the banker; “and precisely because every one else is convinced that this *poor fellow* is a complete ruffian. I wish you joy, Mr. Ewart, of your client. If you succeed in saving him from the halter he so richly merits, you will have a glorious batch of scoundrels on your list the next time you come this circuit. Not a rogue in the neighbourhood will think he has given his neck a fair chance of escape from the gallows, unless he has had the previous benefit of your counsel.”

“The case being so desperate,” I said, laughing, “I ought to act upon the principle of the quack doctors,—no cure no pay.”

“The heavens forbend!” exclaimed Charles; “the learned fraternity of gown and wig would vote you a black sheep, and send you to

Coventry—or to Jericho, if their wishes could effect so much—for reducing the legal commodity to a discount.”

This conversation continued for some time, and, in the course of it, I learnt that Francis Ormiston was not, as I had at first imagined, a man of the lower class, but a poor gentleman, dependent on a wealthy brother, in the West Indies, whose allowance, at all times scanty, had of late ceased entirely, either from caprice or anger. Thus much the active curiosity of the neighbours had extracted from old Alice, who, having nursed him in his childhood, was now his only servant. The crime of which he stood accused was the murder of a farmer's daughter, a girl between six and seven years old; and his guilt was yet further aggravated by there not having been any apparent motive for the deed. The whole affair was witnessed through a crevice by the maid-servant, who slept in the next room; she had been aroused by the opening of the window, but was so terrified by the commital of this barbarous act that she swooned away; and thus he had an opportunity of going into the parlour below,

and breaking open the farmer's strong box, from which he took a bag containing a hundred guineas. So, at least, went the story.

The intimacy of my friend with the ruling powers of D—— was sufficient to obtain for us a relaxation of the usual prison discipline ; and, though it was now close upon nine, yet, fortified by the sheriff's authority, we gained admission into the gaol, in company with a shrewd attorney of the town, whose assistance was engaged for the occasion. The object of our visit lay in so profound a sleep that even our entrance, with all the noise of undoing bolts and bars, failed to wake him. His face, too, though pale and worn, was as placid as if he had neither crime on his conscience, nor fear for the result of the morrow ; and I could not help drawing from it a strong inference in his favour. The old attorney shook his head.

“ When you have lived to my years, sir, and seen as much of these melancholy affairs as I have done, I am afraid you will be less inclined to trust to these appearances.”

The gaoler now roused the prisoner ; and certainly the moment of his waking might well

have justified the worst suspicions. Never in my life did I see a human countenance with such an expression of horror, nor would any language express its peculiar and dreadful character ; but it quickly passed off again, and the face was as calm as ever. Was this man a hypocrite, as well as thief and murderer ? The old attorney gave me an expressive glance, which seemed to say, " You see I am right." And even my philanthropic host appeared to be shocked at this tremendous exhibition. He did not, however, relinquish his intention of serving him, if possible.

The prisoner listened to my friend's proposal with more surprise, as I thought, than pleasure ; and when he had done, replied, in a melancholy tone, that there was no one to care for him. " What matters it," he said, " where I die ? in bed or on the scaffold ; there lives not a being who will regret me. No ; I shall pass away into eternity, as the rain-drops fall into the ocean, unheeded."

" No one ?" asked Charles, emphatically ;
" that's strange !"

" It would be stranger if it were not so ;

the unfortunate are seldom troubled with friends."

"No child, no relation?" again demanded Charles.

The prisoner was violently agitated.

"No child?" repeated my benevolent host; "no son, whose name and prospects may be blighted by his father's disgraceful death?"

"Then let his uncle give him another and a purer name!" cried the prisoner, with a violence that startled us.

"Come, come, master," said the gaoler roughly; "we must have none of these tricks here; if you can't behave yourself civilly and decently when friends of the sheriff come to your cage, I shall take other order with you."

The prisoner went on, without noticing the man's brutality.

"He has taken from me my child; he has taught him to hate his father; he has made me, —great God! look at me! are words needed to tell what is passing here?"

The poor creature pressed his hand upon his forehead, and, sinking down upon the straw, motioned to us to leave the dungeon. My

friend seemed at a loss how to act, when the attorney proposed that I should be left alone with the prisoner, it being probable that any of us singly would have more influence over him than the three together, and for this purpose no one could be so fitted as his intended advocate. The gaoler at first made some slight demur to any communication, unless in his presence; but my friend's known intimacy with the sheriff, and a guinea quietly slipped into his hand, under the pretense of recompensing him for the trouble we were giving him, soon silenced all his scruples.

The tale I now listened to, after the arguments and persuasions of nearly an hour had established me in the prisoner's confidence, was such as to fill me with horror and amazement. If any should wonder at its being obtained in so short a time, let me remind him that the poor creature's heart was burdened to overflowing with his fearful mystery; that my sympathy could not be doubted for a single instant; and that to communicate his sorrows to a willing ear was in fact the greatest relief of which his present situation was susceptible. Passing

over much preliminary matter, as being of less interest, I come at once to the moment when his first hesitation was removed, and shall give what passed with as little variation as possible from his own words.

“Well, then,” he said at last, “you shall hear my tale, though it will give you little pleasure. But first one question. Do you think me mad?”

The question startled me, and for a moment raised a doubt whether he really was in his sound senses; but though his eye had a peculiar, and to me, unintelligible, expression, I certainly saw nothing in his look or manner to warrant the inference of his insanity. I said, therefore, no more than the truth when I replied, that I considered him in all respects as a responsible agent.

“And yet, if I were to tell this story in the open court to-morrow, both judge and jury would unhesitatingly set me down as a maniac.”

Internally, I thought this would be the best conclusion that they could come to; for, from the first hearing of his case, I could see no other chance of his escaping from the gibbet; I repeated however my former answer.

"Sit down, then, he said. "Ah! I had forgotten; a chair would be too great a luxury for the tenant of a dungeon."

He hesitated for some time; but in his frame of mind I thought it best not to thwart him by any attempt at hurrying the disclosures he might have to make. Not a word, therefore, was hazarded on my part; and, left to the current of his own thoughts, the stream in a few minutes led him to begin again.

"Mine is a sad, a dreary tale; but it is fittest for a place like this. How many murderers have slept in this very cell the night before their execution, thinking of the past and of the morrow, till more than mortal agony came upon them, and they could have dashed their brains out against the stones we are standing on, but that some invisible power held them back, even as it were by the hairs of the head. I have no cause to wish to live; and yet it is a fearful thing, when the pulses are high and the body is strong, to say,—To-morrow I must perish;—aye to listen to each hour the clock sounds, and know you shall never hear that hour strike again. Do you not believe that we are all predestined

from our birth?—the one to rags and hunger, the other to fine linen and purple and the fatness of the earth?—the one to a throne, the other to a scaffold?”

There was a startling wildness in this question, and a wandering from the subject, that again almost induced me to doubt his sanity. I answered, however, in a way that I thought was best calculated to soothe him, and endeavoured to lead him back to his narrative.

“I understand you,” he said; “you are impatient to hear my story, and quit this abode of wretchedness. Well, then; my father left all his fortune to my brother, upon the twofold ground, that he had the extraordinary merit of being born a whole twelvemonth before me, and was so exceedingly avaricious, that there was every chance of the bequest being augmented in his hands. During several years I fought a hard battle with the world; my wife died; the little accumulation of my labours was swept away in a single hour. For myself I cared not; but my only boy was now nearly eight years old, and in his behalf I applied to

my brother, who kindly consented to receive him upon the simple condition of his abandoning his father for ever. I acceded. I sacrificed my feelings as a man and a parent to my child's welfare: a fever was the consequence, that for six weeks deprived me of sense. Why was it not my destiny to die then? why,—oh, why was I reserved to an hour like this?—merciful powers!—but it is no matter. I have mentioned all this only to shew you that I have been a mere passive agent in the hands of fate,—that I could not do other than I did,—that I was a straw tossed on the whirlwind—a feather driven at the bidding of the tempest.

“I retired to the neighbourhood of Southampton, there to vegetate till the little remnant of my fortune should be exhausted, and then to die of hunger, if I should have the misfortune to live so long. The sum remaining to me was four hundred pounds, which, with prudence, I reckoned would last me for at least five years. You will, perhaps, ask why I did not use some exertion to increase my store? I could not;—mind and body were both paralyzed by misfortune;—I could not.

“My only pleasure—if indeed I could be truly said to have any pleasure—was in wandering over those uncultivated parts of the country where I was least likely to be interrupted by the sight of human beings. In one of these excursions, I stumbled unexpectedly on a horde of gipsies. To put an end to their importunity, which might, perhaps, have ended in rougher usage, I submitted my hand to the inspection of a young sybil, and was listening somewhat impatiently to the usual details of such prognosticators, when we were surprised by the appearance of the leader of the band, an old man, whose piercing eyes and full-toned voice formed a singular contrast with his gaunt form, his thin grey locks, and his deeply-furrowed brows. He observed me keenly for a few minutes; and then, thrusting the woman aside, exclaimed in a peremptory tone,—‘Away with you, Martha; this is none of your customers.—Have you a mind to hear the truth?’ he continued, turning to me.

“‘Can you tell it?’ I replied.

“‘Ay, as surely as ever astronomer foretold

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eclipse of the sun or the appearance of a comet.'

"Willing to get rid of what I then considered to be mere jugglery, I tendered him half-a-crown, and bade him shew his skill.

"'Truth is not to be bought and sold,' he replied. 'Had your money been my object, I should have left you to the juggleries of my people; they have wit enough to cozen you, for as wise as you may think yourself.'

"'This is strange—a gipsy refuse silver! I must own you pique my curiosity not a little by this unusual disinterestedness. I should be glad to hear your truth.'

"'You will be glad of no such thing,' said the gipsy, scowling; 'the truth I have to tell will be gall and wormwood to you, scoffer; it will follow you like your shadow; in the broad day, in the watches of the night, it will haunt you, turning your wholesome meals to poison, and your bed of rest into a bed of serpents. There will be no refuge from it except in the grave.'

"'Let me hear your truth, notwithstanding,' I replied; for I began to be stimulated by curiosity, if not by a stronger feeling. Perhaps

it was only another link of the inevitable chain that unites our cradle with our death-bed.

“‘Stand back, all of you,’ he said to his people; and the whole band, who had hitherto crowded around me, retreated in an instant.

“He addressed me in the lowest and deepest tones of his peculiar voice: ‘You are doomed and marked out for a murderer! there is that on your brow which never yet deceived me—behold!

“Thus saying, he drew a small mirror from his pocket, and held it up to me. I started. If it reflected me truly, there was a slight blush of blood upon my forehead. Suspecting some deception, I endeavoured to seize the glass; but he drew back hastily, and exclaimed, ‘Use no violence; if I lift up but my little finger, you will dearly rue it. As to your fate, *that* is inevitable! every man’s destiny is written on his brow, even in his cradle—ay, in his mother’s womb; and yours is to be a murderer. We never meet again.’

“This adventure made little impression upon me at the time. Though I could not exactly comprehend the secret of the apparent stain on

my forehead, as reflected from the glass, there was yet nothing in it very wonderful; a hundred tricks are daily and hourly practised by jugglers, all infinitely more difficult of explanation than that of the old gipsy appeared to be. And as to his motive, *that* might be found either in spleen at my incredulity, or in a wish to make substantial profit of me by exciting my fears, while, at the same time, he won my confidence by an unusual show of disinterestness. I dwell upon this point, that you may see I was not then, nor am I now, a man likely to be the dupe of a diseased imagination—would to Heaven I were mad! I should not, indeed, be on better terms with my own conscience—for who can shun his destiny?—but I should not die, as I must now die, with the execrations of all good men following me to the grave.

“It was about a month after this, when, on a fine winter’s morning, I took a fancy to resume my long-neglected, but once favourite, amusement of shooting. The exercise and the unwonted occupation of mind occasioned a flow of spirits that I had not felt for years before.

I even began to form a good omen of the future from the success of the day's sporting, for the game was abundant, and I found I had lost little of my former dexterity with the gun. Wretched infatuation!

"A pheasant got up from the cover about fifty yards in advance of me, and flew off straight towards the common that bounded the little copse. I fired. A shrill scream followed, and a boy, about ten years old, started from the bushes. Imagine my horror when I saw his shoulder streaming with blood. I was too much agitated to inquire whether he was dangerously wounded or not; but immediately taking him in my arms, and, soothing him as well as I was able, I with some difficulty conveyed him to a hovel on the common, which was fortunately close at hand. It proved to be his own home, and the mother received me with the language and gestures of a fury. In a few minutes this woman's violence had drawn about us several passing labourers, and, what was of more importance, it at last attracted the attention of an apothecary, who chanced to be riding by on his way to a patient in the little

village of Hamble. The instant I understood from one of the peasants the profession and quality of this man, I summoned him to the boy's aid, making myself responsible for all the necessary expenses. Upon the wound being examined, it proved to be of little consequence, a few shots only having entered the fleshy part of the shoulder; but even this result did not satisfy the infuriated mother: 'Well,' she exclaimed, 'for all that, he will be hanged one day for as good a deed, and I shall live to see it, or my name's not Meg Alison. He has got murderer written on his forehead as large as the print of the church Bible. Mark that, all of you.'

"The doctor and the countrymen here interposed; and while they were endeavouring, not very successfully, as it seemed, to pacify the beldam, I quietly retreated—quietly so far as regarded external appearances—but within—ay, within was the tumult of a whirlpool. In vain I struggled with the dark boding that came over me—the conviction of an unavoidable destiny; had not the gipsy's prophecy been nearly realised? had it not been re-echoed by

a poor ignorant wretch, who had neither the means nor the motives of deception? I looked upon the hills, and the waters, and the skies, in the vain hope that in some quarter I might find consolation—but it was no where. Every thing wore a strange aspect; all nature had rejected me; and the air glowed with the dull, red heat of a furnace. Oh! I was inexpressibly wretched! it is impossible the bitterness of the last hour can go beyond it; if it should, great God! for what were we created?

“Never was night more welcome to me than the night of this eventful day. My body was exhausted, my brain was literally worn out by the fire of thought; and I remember well having faintly struggled against sleep, on purpose to prolong the exquisite enjoyment of feeling it steal over my jaded senses.

“I know not how long I slept—perhaps a few hours, for the moon was high when I was awakened from this delicious slumber by an unknown voice calling on me by name. I looked around my chamber, and in the farthest part saw a dusky figure, almost too undefined in its outlines to be described, and wrapt about

with loose robes that resembled nothing so much as the palest moonlight on a dark ground. Upon the brow of the creature was a star, and the brightness of it glanced from its pale features like the cold, watery sunbeams from a rock of ice. It was as if winter had suddenly come into the room, so chilling was the air; and there I lay, numbed by frost, my teeth chattering, my limbs immovable, and the very marrow of my bones aching with intense cold. At length I managed to stammer out, Who art thou?

“‘Thy destiny!’ replied a voice, so sad and thrilling!—and yet so sweet! it was as the sound of music creeping over the midnight waters.

“I gazed in wonder; could it be a dream?—no; all else was too palpable to sense—the chairs, the tables, the books—every thing was marked with reality. Fear and trembling came upon me, and I murmured ‘Avaunt! in the name of the Holy and the Mighty One, avaunt!’

“‘It is in vain,’ said the same sweet and melancholy voice, ‘it is in vain thou wouldst struggle with thy destiny. I *was* ere this earth

was made, and shall be when it has passed away. *Thou must slay, and be slain*; it is written; and what is written must be accomplished.'

"My tongue cleaved to the roof of my mouth; I could only gaze in silence at the chilling vision. At length the clock of the near church began to strike twelve, and every stroke seemed to shatter me to pieces with its deep vibrations. When it ceased, the star on the phantom's head gradually dimmed; the figure itself grew fainter and fainter, and at last nothing remained save the moonlight upon the wall. I sank again into a profound slumber.

"Night after night for months was the same scene repeated, till the very approach of bedtime became a terror to me. I have watched the lengthening shadows of the evening with agony unutterable; I have tried to drive away the night with revel, but it availed me not. It was to no purpose that I endeavoured to put off the hour of sleep; it was to no purpose that I fled from place to place—there was no rest for me; go where I would, do what I would, the phantom still followed me; nor did it make

the slightest difference, whether I lived in the crowds of a city or in the loneliest parts of the country. Often often did I fancy I should go mad ; and even now I wonder that my brain held together.

“ But this was only the beginning of my persecution. After the lapse of a few months, my days began to be as miserable as my nights. In the broad beams of the sun all manner of grotesque and horrible phantoms would swarm about me, mowing with their lips and mocking with their long shadowy arms ; and then the rays of light would change to blood as they streamed down upon me, while the sound of funeral bells would come booming over the common, though not a single church was within miles of the place. At other times—and, oh ! this was the worst of all my horrors—the same sad and musical voice would come upon my ear with its nightly warning, ‘ Slay, and be slain ! ’ —and the rocks would take it up in echoes for minutes together, ‘ Slay, and be slain ! ’ each reverberation growing louder and deeper than the other, till my brain reeled with the uproar, and I sank exhausted on the ground.

“For nearly twelve months did I bear this torture—not without flinching, but still I did bear it; and few, I believe, could have borne as much for half the time. A change then came over my mind, which you will scarcely credit; and yet it is truth, as firm as the earth whereon we stand. I began to feel a pride in being thus marked out from others of my kind—in being predestined a man of blood. I now courted my hour of torture, and felt exalted in proportion to the intensity of my suffering. The deed for which I was born I resolved to do, but I would proceed warily in my high vocation; I would select a victim for the sacrifice, not wait till chance took from me all the merit of the intended immolation.

“My first thought was to destroy some individual who, from his bad passions, would be no loss to society. A little reflection, however, brought me to an opposite conclusion. I determined my victim should go pure and innocent to the grave, that I might not be the means of sending a soul into perdition; and my choice, after duly weighing all things, fell upon the child of the farmer. She was one of the fairest

creatures I ever beheld, with eyes like violets, and cheeks ripe and sunny as a peach. Poor thing! she is happy now. Had she lived, it might have been far otherwise with her; a time might have come for her to curse, as I do now, the hour that gave her birth.

“I fixed the night of the full moon for the deed; for it was then, as I had often observed, that my enemy was always strongest—growing vaster and more terrible in the cold light of that luminary. A ladder, which stood against the wall, and which had been used by the farmer in trimming and nailing up a vine, afforded me the easy means of entrance to the child’s bedroom, through the window. I ascended, threw open the sash, and entered. My little victim lay fast asleep, {and ready for the blow, for the night being hot, she had flung off the clothes in the restlessness of her slumber. As I approached the bed-side she murmured something—what, I could not hear—and, impelled by an undefinable feeling, I bent my head down to listen. Again she spoke—it was of her father; and a tear sparkled in the moonlight on her dark eye-lashes. At the moment I would

have given worlds, had I possessed them, that this bitter cup might have passed away from me; but it could not be; my destiny rose before me, darker, sadder, colder than ever. I groaned, and struck——.”

At this part of his narrative, the prisoner, accompanying his words with action, knocked down the lamp, which, contrary to rule, had been supplied for my accomodation. I must confess that I felt somewhat alarmed at being left alone, and in utter darkness, with one whom I could not look upon as other than insane. In the hope of diverting him from any act of violence, I began to ask questions relative to his son—no answer. I repeated them—still all was silent. Had he swooned from the excess of his passions, or was he meditating mischief to myself? Instinctively I drew back to the remotest corner of the dungeon, with a muttered curse upon my own folly, that ever induced me to meddle with such a business.

In this crisis, the heaviness of the night passed off; and the clouds rolling away from the moon, a flood of light was poured through the grated window into the dungeon. At the dis-

tance of a few feet only, with his back to the wall, stood the prisoner, his glassy eyes fixed full upon me, and realising in his own appearance the account he had given of the phantom, for his limbs were perfectly rigid, and his features were as immovable as if they had been cut out of marble. I expected the instant when he would spring upon me, and with no little alarm; for, to judge from our respective forms, I should not have had much chance with him in a trial of strength.

He burst into a frightful laugh—may I never see such a laugh again!—the next moment he fell to the ground, sobbing and groaning from the intensity of his newly-awakened feelings. Thank Heavens! I hear the gaoler's approaching footsteps—the key grates in the lock—an age is in this moment—the door is opened, and I rush out of the dungeon.

If any old bencher should be inclined to ridicule my weakness, let him remember I was perfectly new to these affairs: It is not so with me now: I see the judge assume the black cap with as much indifference as if it were a Welsh wig, thanks to time and legal habits, which

have hardened my heart till it has become as insensible as the nether mill-stone.

In the course of the night, I had made up mind as to my future proceedings. The morning of trial came, and great was my surprise at the appearance of the prisoner. Not the slightest signs of insanity in his clear, quiet eye ; not the least trouble, or fear, or passion, on his pale, wasted features ; all was calmness and collectedness ; and yet it could not, for a moment, be construed into apathy. He listened to the charge with attention, and replied with a firm voice, " Guilty of the murder—not guilty of the theft." The judge admonished him to reconsider his plea, assuring that, if he persisted in his reply, there was not the slightest chance of mercy being extended to him. His answer I will give, as nearly as possible, in his own words.

" I thank you, my lord, for your admonition ; it is no doubt kindly intended ; but it is yours to condemn, mine to suffer ; each is only performing the part allotted to him, and pride or complaint are alike useless.

" I stand accused of robbery—the charge is

false; and as I can have no motive for the denial, except a wish to speak the truth, as becomes a dying man, I trust I shall be believed.

“From the same feeling I admit the murder of the poor girl; it was a sad necessity, which none can more deeply regret than myself, the mother, who bore the child, has not shed more bitter tears over her unhappy fate than I have done. Of the motives that led to the deed I must be silent now and for ever. To one person, and to one only, have I communicated the mystery; how I came to be so idly talkative is to myself unaccountable, except that we all have our moments of weakness, when impulse rises superior to reason and the tongue betrays the secrets of the heart. But that person now hears me; and I earnestly conjure him, as he values honour, not to embitter my last moments by a betrayal of my confidence. He well knows that it would avail me nothing; or, at best, would save my life to imprison me in a mad-house.

“I see many looks of hatred and horror cast upon me from various parts of this assembly;

I am sorry that it is so ; for I love my fellow-creatures, and would wish to be beloved by them in return. Could they read my heart, or understand the motives that led to this action, it might perhaps be otherwise. But this cannot be ; I must, therefore, endure in silence.

“It is customary, I believe, to give up the bodies of those in my unhappy situation to the hospital for dissection. Could this part of my sentence be remitted, I should feel grateful ; if it be denied, I shall not complain. Should your lordship, however, be inclined to grant my request—and I understand it is in your discretion,—I would then pray of the father and mother of the poor child to allow me to be laid in the same grave with my victim. In the hands of my old servant, Alice, I have deposited money to defray my funeral expenses.

“I have nothing more to add, but that I am fully prepared to meet the sentence which, I know full well, it is your lordship’s duty to pronounce ; unless, indeed, I may be allowed to hope thus much,—that, as I die in peace and

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charity with all men, the same kindly feeling may follow me to the grave."

This simple address was rendered wonderfully impressive by the manner in which it was delivered. Strangers were, one and all, affected to tears by it; and even the oldest lawyers wore on their faces an expression of unwonted interest and gravity. For myself, I honestly confess, it made a child of me.

In the evening, when the business of the day was over, I paid a visit to the judge, and represented to him the undoubted insanity of my client. He listened to me with patience, and even with kindness; though my arguments failed to produce the desired conviction. At last I so far prevailed with him that he consented to send two eminent medical men of the town to examine into the state of the prisoner's mind, with a promise of recommending him to mercy if any thing in their report should justify such a measure. To my great surprise the inquiry established his sanity; and, in consequence, the poor wretch underwent the extreme penalty of the law.

About two years afterwards, the servant-maid, being sentenced to transportation upon the conviction of passing base coin, confessed to the robbery of the farmer.

TWELVE HOURS

IN THE

LIFE OF A NERVOUS MAN.

I like not this grinning honour that Sir Walter hath.—*Shakespeare.*

I HAVE the misfortune of being more finely wrought than my neighbours, and of possessing nerves of a more delicate conformation, or, as my maligners will have it, of being a little too prone to take fright at danger. But if they think the organ of cautiveness is too great with me, I can assure them, in requital, that I think they have the bump of combativeness to a most preposterous degree ; and whether the said

protuberance will lead to glory or a gallows is more than any one can say. Indeed I never could see the merit of that stupid insensibility to danger which the world is pleased to call courage, and which to my thinking is only another name for ignorance, or deficient sensibility, or both united. And what, after all, is this courage good for, unless to betray the possessor of it into all manner of broils and difficulties, at one time curtailing him of his fair proportion, and leaving him minus some useful member, such as a leg or an arm, while at another it may chance to make him acquainted with the wholesome rigour of the law? Then, too, it is such a vulgar, common qualification; we have thousands, and tens of thousands of stupid dogs in the army and navy, who, knowing the exact value of their own skulls, would at any time wager them against ball or bullet for the consideration of eighteen-pence a day. I can't say, however, that I much blame them for it; as, if they should happen to lose their lives they lose no such weighty matter. But it is far otherwise with men, like myself, of sense and reflection; when I consider how much

trouble and expense it has cost to make me what I am, I can by no means reconcile myself to the idea of exposing the valuable result to any thing like the chance of damage.

Such being my sentiments, it will perhaps be a matter of surprise to you that I should trust myself to the countless hazards of a continental town, in which, not to speak of the chance of my being shipwrecked between Dover and Calais, I should also be liable to the daggers of banditti, and the fear of breaking my neck in crossing the Pyrenees. All these perils I had duly weighed, but then they were distant, and by no means certain; others had escaped them, and so might I, but who ever escaped in a duel with Sir Phelim O'Connor? He had already killed his dozen, and, as he was pleased to inform me, with the air of one who was telling an exceedingly good joke, he had "a mighty desire to make a baker's dozen of it, by adding me to the list."

I, on my part, thought this desire a little unreasonable; and, as the discussion grew unpleasant, his friend hinting something about canes and cowards, I withdrew myself to the

continent with the intention of staying abroad till it should please Sir Phelim to abate somewhat of his absurd wrath, or to forget me altogether. If neither of these desirable events should fall out, there was still a tolerable chance of so fiery a gentleman involving himself in a dispute with an opponent of less sensibility than myself, and thus getting his mittimus to another world, which would equally well answer my purpose.

The experience I had acquired of a traveller's hazards, in only going from Brighton to Dieppe, and from Dieppe again to Paris, gave me every possible inclination to fix my abode in the capital of the French empire; but fate, in the disguise of a Gallic doctor, who had been called to my aid in a fit of I know not what precise kind, ordered me off to Italy. Great as was my reluctance to encounter the perils of such a journey, I had no alternative but that or dying—at least if any trust could be placed in my medical oracle—and therefore, as I always do on such occasions, I chose to risk the remote danger, rather than the one present. At all events, it was putting off the evil day, and that was something.

I will not trouble you with the recital of the multitude of hair-breadth escapes I met with in my journey from Paris across the seas. They were, indeed, well worth remembering, and, many of them, such as I cannot now reflect upon without the same feelings of horror that are said to agitate the somnambulist upon being shown, when awake, the perils of his nightly wanderings. But, fearful as they were, they bear no comparison with my adventures of one night at an inn about five leagues from Terracina, or Bergamo, I am uncertain which, or whether it was either of the two, for I am not very learned in nice points of geography, and, even when the people told me the name of any place, I generally contrived to forget it. Two things, however, I do remember with the utmost distinctness; the forest, where we broke down, was a very wild forest full of trees, and the building was a large ruin in the midst of a desolate spot, far removed from any human habitation, both, in short, being precisely the kind of places that romance-writers choose for the perpetration of their most horrid murders. With these plain indications, any person of

common sense who travels the same road, and feels sufficient curiosity on the subject, cannot fail to recognise the exact locality of the "*Twelve hours in the life of a nervous man.*"

The lively good-humoured face of my driver, whom I had taken up at the last stage only, served for a time to reconcile me to the dreariness of the way; but when the evening closed in, and found us still far from the place where we intended to pass the night, I must confess I began to feel uneasy. My attention being thus called to the man, I observed—what had before escaped my notice—that he was by no means urging on his horses to their fair speed. At times, too, he would whistle in a very peculiar manner, and, when I called out to him to cease his confounded clamour, and drive faster, as I had no mind to pass the night on the road if he had, the rascal only whistled so much the louder. This was too much, but I was determined he should have no pretext for not hearing me, so I cried out again at the utmost pitch of my voice—

"Momolo, you rascal!"

Momolo, I should observe, is the diminutive

of Geronimo, the same that we in English call Jerome.

"Momolo, you scoundrel!"

This was delivered in too high a tone for him to pretend deafness any longer.

"Si, signor," he replied, pulling up, and turning half round upon his saddle to face me.

The traitor!—to stop his horses at a time like this, when, for aught I knew to the contrary, there might be a robber taking aim at me from behind the nearest oak. I had never fired off a pistol in my life; but I felt at the moment that it would cost me very little effort to shoot him dead on the spot. Indeed, I did go so far as to draw the weapon from its holster, and held it ready for action.

"Drive on, I say, and faster, rascal, for your life—for your life! Do you hear, villain? get out of that snail's trot, and put your horses to something like a gallop, as you hope to sleep with whole bones to-night."

"Diavolo! is the signor ill?"

"Very ill—exceedingly ill—drive on as if you were driving to the devil."

"Santa Maria! Will not the signor taste a

drop first out of my little flask? I never go unprovided."

He was just getting off his horse, under the pretext of coming to my assistance. I saw not a moment was to be lost, for it was quite evident he was only seeking to protract the time, to give his comrades a better chance of falling in with us, and, growing desperate, I levelled my pistol at him, and bade him drive on instantly, or I would shoot him dead without another word. This threat had its effect. He made no reply; but set off at full gallop, dashing along over stock and stone in a way that made me tremble for my neck, and showed me I had only exchanged one peril for another. It was in vain that I shouted "Stop, stop!" adding every term of vituperation that my memory could supply me with in French, English, Italian, and German, such as rascal, hundsfoth, canaille, and their various synonyms and collaterals. The more I shouted, the more furiously did he apply whip and spur to the reeking flanks of his cattle, till at last, in the midst of all this uproar, smash went the axle-tree, and down came the chaise with me in it.

Fortunately I received no damage beyond a few slight contusions, and the joy I felt in finding myself landed on terra firma in some measure compensated for the terror of my fall. The rascal too, I must allow that, showed himself extremely solicitous for my safety, making all manner of fine apologies for the accident; but then they never cost an Italian any thing, and, when I came to weigh the real merits of the case, the delight I had experienced at first on finding myself with whole limbs underwent a very considerable diminution. Here I was in the midst of a gloomy forest, my chaise broken down beyond the possibility of immediate repair, the night rapidly drawing in, and not a creature to be seen far or near, except Momolo, whom I had such good reason to distrust. Still, as I had no one else to apply to, I could not help consulting him.

“Well, Momolo,” I said, “what are we to do now?”

He shrugged his shoulders with a most piteous air of doubt.

“I know nothing better than—Santa Maria! that I should forget my old friend, honest

Giuseppe ! He lives hard by here in the forest, in the ruins of an old hunting villa, and though he does not make a trade of taking in travellers, I can warrant you a warm reception. Ha ! ha ! many is the moonlight prank we have played together in these same woods."

The blood curdled in my veins at this proposal. It was the very counterpart of the trick first broached in the "Monk," and afterwards retailed in a hundred novels, a pretty plain proof that it is a customary thing with drivers on the continent to break down their vehicles in gloomy forests, now the abode of some associate, to which the poor traveller is afterwards half-enticed, half-driven, like a fatted pig to the slaughter-house. The execrable traitor ! as if to leave upon my mind no doubt of his horrible purpose, he gave a cunning leer when alluding to his moonlight frolics, as he called them, that would have let an idiot into the very heart of his projected villany. To go with him into the murderer's den was a thing not to be thought of ; and, accordingly, I signified to him, in a tone of as much resolution as

I could muster, that it was my fixed intent to stay where I was till morning.

"You can go," I added, "on one of the horses to the next post, and bring the requisite assistance."

The fact was, I had determined in my own mind to plunge deeper into the forest the moment I had got rid of him, for I well knew, if he left me, it would only be to return with a party of his associates for my destruction. Finding me obstinate on this point, the traitor saw that he must either give way, or use compulsion; and to this strong measure he did not like to have recourse, probably because he carried no other weapon than the knife at his girdle, while I had fire-arms.

He was accordingly about to set off, when a shrill whistle was heard in the wood to the right of us, and a spotted greyhound flew across our path.

"There goes Silver!" exclaimed my driver; "where she is, Giuseppe can't be far off. What, ho!—hilloah! hilloah! Giu—sep—pe!—hilloah!"

The person thus summoned was not slow in

making his appearance. He was a tall, athletic fellow, with a rifle on his shoulder, in the dress of a forester, and was followed by two other dogs beside the greyhound, all of whom came sniffing at me with an air of suspicion, and then, as if satisfied with the result of their canine investigation, bounded off to the rascal Momolo, whom they evidently recognised for an old acquaintance. I at once felt that resistance would be fruitless, the odds being too much against me, for it was plain, from a single glance at this Giuseppe, that he was as daring as he was powerful; and I listened, therefore, in passive terror, to the arrangements which the worthy associates thought proper to make in my behalf.

"The signor shall be heartily welcome to my house, such as it is," said Giuseppe; "and, at all events, a poor roof is better than sleeping in the forest such a night as this is like to be."

"Si, si," replied Momolo, looking up at the dark sky; "there's a vast of black clouds gathering on the hills to windward. I shall hardly reach Terracina" (I think it was Terracina) "before the storm sets in."

And the villain crossed himself with as much unction as if he were on the most pious errand imaginable. To look at him, one would have imagined that murder was no more than a gentlemanly peccadillo, not at all detracting from a man's claims to be considered by his patron saint.

"Put spurs to your horse, then, friend Momolo," said Giuseppe, "lest you taste more water than you care for; and leave the signor to my charge; I'll give a good account of him, I warrant you."

Could any thing be plainer? A man must have been a downright idiot not to know how to interpret these words, though the speaker veiled their meaning, as he thought, by an affectation of bluntness. At all events, a person of my susceptible disposition was not to be imposed upon so easily. I saw the danger that awaited me, but, unfortunately, I saw no immediate means of escaping from it.

"It's coming!" exclaimed Momolo; "I feel a large rain-drop on my nose."

"Aye, no doubt," replied Giuseppe, laughing; "and methought I heard the drop whiz as

if it had lighted on red-hot iron — thanks to the lachryma with which you cherish the everlasting fire on the tip of it.”

Momolo replied by singing—

“ Nose! Nose!
No fire that glows
Has half the warmth of a jolly red nose.

And so good night to you, honest Beppo. Good night, signor, I shall be back again long before you are awake.”

Long before I was awake?—Oh, yes; there needed not the peculiar glance of the traitor’s eye, or the laugh of his worthy associate, to tell me what the words meant. It was not intended that, when once asleep, I should ever wake again. And yet, with such a scheme in view, the villains could grin and make their empty jests!

I know not why, but I certainly felt much relieved when Momolo put spurs to his horse, and was quickly out of sight; not that I had any thought of measuring my strength with the sturdy Beppo, now that we were alone; the

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result of such a trial, even had I possessed the fool-hardy courage to venture upon it, was much too evident ; yet still I felt that I had a much better chance of escape from one than from two enemies, and in this spirit I followed my guide whither he thought proper to lead me.

After winding through the forest for about half an hour, by paths little better than deer-tracks, we suddenly emerged upon a large open heath, covered with furze and intersected by a multitude of sand-pits. In the midst of this desolation stood a large building, which, from its ruined state, was in excellent keeping with the rest of the scene.

“Yonder is my house, signor,” said Giuseppe. “I cannot boast much of it, being, as you see, little more than a ruin ; but the inside is somewhat more comfortable than you would suppose, to look at it ; and as to room, there’s no want of that. Could I move the old carcase a little nearer the road, or, what might be easier, bring the road to the building, I might set up for an inn-keeper. And yet, perhaps, it’s better as it is.”

The last words he muttered to himself. They needed no interpreter.

On entering what appeared to serve both for kitchen and parlour, if not for other purposes, I found the table spread for supper, and, in farther confirmation of my suspicions, observed there was a dozen knives and forks laid, though my host's family amounted but to four, namely, himself, his wife, one daughter, and a stout red-haired girl of eighteen, whom he called Bettina. The quick eye of Giuseppe soon saw my dissatisfaction, and what had occasioned it, and for a moment a dark shade settled on his brow; he was, however, too practised a dissembler to let his features betray him for long together; the cloud passed off as rapidly as it had formed; and it was with an air of the frankest good humour that he hastened to do away with the unfavourable impression which, it was plain to see, had been made upon me by his supper preparations.

"You are surprised," he said, "to find a poor man's cloth spread for so many; and, truth to say, we are not often troubled with visitors; no offence though to you, signor; you

are as welcome as the best hound that ever tracked deer or pulled down boar at bay, and that, for a forester, is using a bold word, too ; but the fact is, I had learned the Count's secretary intended having a day's sport amongst our hills here, and I wished to show him and his people the civility of a woodman's supper ; we, that have neither land nor money, must curry favour with the great man's great man, or we are like to go without salt to our porridge."

"And are we, then, to expect his Lordship's secretary?" asked the woman, significantly.

"No, dame," replied her husband ; "the wind has got round to the northward I hardly expect him before the morning."

This reason appeared very sufficient to the wife, but, I must confess, it produced a very different effect on me. What, in the name of Heaven, had the north wind to do with the secretary's shooting? it was evidently a cant mode of speech to conceal their meaning from strangers, and yet perfectly intelligible amongst themselves.

In spite of my best efforts to hide my real feelings, I could not so far subdue nature but

that Giuseppe penetrated through the thin veil with which I sought to disguise my uneasiness. He chose, however, to attribute the emotion visible in my pale face to the fall I had experienced, and I, of course, pretended to be the dupe of his artifice.

"Coragio, signor," he said; "the tumble can't have done you much harm, since it has left you with whole limbs: and, as for the matter of the fright, a glass of lachryma and a plate-ful of that same stew which smells so savourily—a mess of wild ducks, isn't it, dame?—"

"Aye, and hares and partridges to boot," replied the woman.

"—Better and better," continued Giuseppe. "A handsome sup of that, signor, with the lachryma aforesaid, will soon call the blood into your cheeks, which, to speak Heaven's truth, and an honest man's, look as white as dame Jutta's sheets bleaching in a spring breeze."

There was an ominous interchange of smiles amongst the women at this speech, which plainly intimated my wine-cup, or my meal, or

perhaps both, were not to go undrugged. To put off the evil hour as long as possible, and to gain, if that could be, some chance for my life, I pretended to enter into my host's view of the matter, and even expressed a hope that my staying there till the morning would not occasion them any inconvenience.

"None in the world," he replied. "For supper, there is, as you may see, provision for a dozen; so you are not like to sleep on an empty stomach, which we foresters, who rise with the sun, hold to be no good doctrine. As to bed, indeed, that is another chapter, and one that requires counsel; for though we have rooms enough, and to spare, yet the most of them are in such a state that a rat would not abide in them for an hour, if he had any decent hole elsewhere to hide his head in. To be sure, there's the blue room—"

"The blue room!" exclaimed my hostess.

"The blue room!" reiterated her daughter.

"You are fools," said Giuseppe, angrily,—
"downright fools."

"Beppo! Beppo!" exclaimed the wife, in spite of all the nods and winks which he gave

her to be silent; "I really wonder at you. You see how timorous the poor young gentleman is, and if the ghost should pay his usual visit to the blue room, we shall find him a dead man in the morning."

"Confound the woman's chattering," muttered my host. "I was willing to keep this idle tale from your ears," he added, turning to me, "that you might have a snug night's rest; but, now the murder's out, I suppose you have no mind to the blue chamber—not that I believe there's a word of truth in the story."

I caught the woman's eye, and the expressive glance she gave me determined me at once.

"Mine honest host," I said, "it is as well to deal on the square with you, instead of boasting of a courage which might chance to fail me when it was most wanted. For the living I have no dread"—and I laid a strong emphasis on the negative—"but as to your ghosts, whether in blue or black chambers, I take no shame to say that I should most unwillingly intrude myself upon their company. So, with your good leave, I'll pass the night here in the arm-chair before the fire."

This proposal seemed to disconcert Giuseppe. He cast a fierce look at the women for their interference, but suddenly re-assuming his usual frankness of manner, he said—"No, no, signor, that will never do; we must manage better for you than so, or we were but churlish hosts. Bettina here shall sleep with my daughter, and you can have her chamber."

It was now Bettina's turn to show confusion. She coloured up to her brows, and in the next instant turned deadly pale; but she said nothing, and, as her back was to Giuseppe, he did not notice it. I hardly knew how to construe this emotion. Was it possible I had a friend in her? and if so, had she the power to assist me? It was my only chance, however, and I determined to keep my eye upon her; but it seemed as if the crafty Giuseppe had seen through my purpose, for, during the supper, which was now served up, he watched us both narrowly, and I observed his manner towards the poor girl was harsh and strongly expressive of distrust. Still I calculated upon her lighting me to my bed-room, when I should have an opportunity of concerting with her some plan of

escape, if she really were inclined, as I did not doubt she was, to be my friend in this struggle for life. This scheme, however, was defeated by the vigilance of the wife, who, to do her justice, was as crafty a looking old crone as ever was inspired by the spirit of envy to mar a hopeful project. Under the pretext of paying due respect to her guest she would insist upon shewing me to my bed-room, and, when I endeavoured to evade her politeness, had the daring impudence to hint that she had observed sundry glances pass between me and Bettina, and did not think it prudent to trust us together. I was forced, therefore, to comply ; farther resistance could only serve to convince them that I was aware of their murderous intentions, and thus bring about the catastrophe at once, whereas now it was probable they would delay the deed till they thought me asleep, in which respite I might by some unforeseen accident stumble on the means of safety.

The moment the old crone left me, I locked and bolted the door, and proceeded carefully to examine the room, lest there should be any other entrance by which I could be taken una-

wares by my murderers. Minute as my search was, I could discover nothing of the kind, and this, if it was not decisive of my safety, was some sort of satisfaction. Not knowing what other precautionary measures to take till the peril assumed a more definite form, I at least resolved to afford no opening to the enemy; and, with this determination, withdrew the light from the window, and flung myself into a large oaken arm-chair, that stood by the bedside—not with a view to sleep, but that I might the more surely remain awake, and be prepared to repel attacks. Chance, however, will sometimes frustrate the best laid schemes; in spite of all my precautions, before half an hour was over, the treacherous arm-chair, with its high back and well-stuffed cushion, had seduced me into a light dose, from which I was roused by a noise like the rattling of pebbles against glass. I started up in an instant, but yet so screened by the bed-curtains that I could see without being seen. What was my horror, when by the feeble light of the lamp upon the hearth, I saw a human face close against the window! Before I could recover from my

alarm sufficiently to know how to act, the proprietor of the face had got one leg into the room, supported by the window-ledge. Still I was utterly powerless. I strove to speak, but the tongue cleaved to the roof of my mouth, and just as little was I able to stir hand or foot, though I was shaking all over as if under the influence of fever-frost.

With the greatest caution the ruffian now drew in the other leg,—probably he feared to waken me—and in one second more he would have been in the room, and myself at his mercy, when by some miracle my faculties were suddenly restored to me. I called out, or rather shrieked out, to him to retire, at the same time threatening him with my pistols, one of which I brandished in either hand, and I have no doubt that my attitude was sufficiently imposing, for fear always supplies me with energy. Be this as it may, the assassin was alarmed. He turned upon me a look that I shall never forget, and actually leaped out of the window, a danger which no man would have incurred unless he had been previously frightened out of his senses.

I had thus got rid of the peril for the immediate moment, but was it to be expected that the ruffian would so easily give up his enterprise? would he not return with the rest of his gang, who, it was to be supposed, were not far off, and overpower me with numbers? To learn the worst at once, I shaded my lamp with my hand, that the light might not betray me, and stole cautiously to the window. There was the sound of voices below, as of two people in angry argument, but they spoke in so low a tone that, though I strained my ears till listening actually became painful, I could gather nothing distinctly of their purpose. One voice, however, was that of a female—perhaps of Bettina—who was in vain endeavouring to persuade her remorseless master to forego his purpose; for that it was her master I had no doubt, though my assailant was a short man, and Giuseppe was a tall, muscular fellow; such disguises are nothing to people of this stamp; they can, as every body knows, make themselves long or short, thick or thin, at their own good pleasure.

What measure was I next to take? should

I stay where I was and trust to the security of the room, or should I at all hazards venture out in the hope of effecting my escape? To stir was sufficiently perilous, and it was ten to one that I met some of them in my way; and yet to remain without making any effort was in some sort committing an act of suicide; it was in fact neither more nor less than waiting their good leisure to cut my throat; and, as I had no mind to oblige them by such an excess of civility, there was nothing left for it but to stand the hazard of the die.

Shading, therefore, the lamp as well as I could with my cloak, and creeping along with the stealthy pace of a cat, I ventured out into the passage, where I found all was still. This encouraged me. I took the precaution of bolting my chamber-door on the outside, so that if the assassins should again enter through the window, they might be delayed in the pursuit of me, for though the delay thus occasioned might only be of a few minutes, yet minutes were precious to a man in my situation. Thus secured in the rear, I passed hastily, but with the utmost caution, through the long corridor

and down the stairs leading to the kitchen, where I paused to listen if any one were yet stirring. Not a sound was to be heard, and the light that shone through the chinks in the wood-work was too faint to be any thing more than fire-light. With a beating heart—and for once beating from hope, not fear—I opened the door; but what words can picture my dismay when I found myself all at once confronted by my host, who, on my entrance, suddenly started from his knees? What he had been doing in that humble posture, I could not guess; certainly he bore no marks of one who had been occupied in prayer.

“Diavolo!” he exclaimed, scowling most ominously; “what brings you from your bed at this time of night? this is no inn, signor, where, as long as a man pays his reckoning, he is free of garret and cellar, but the house of an honest woodman, who has taken you in that you might not lodge more roughly in the forest. If these be your pranks, I shall wish I had left you where I found you.”

I endeavoured to appease him by saying—
“In good truth, my worthy host, I meant no

offence—none in the world. It was only that I fancied my bed-room somewhat of the coldest, and so I came down to warm myself at the kitchen-fire, and indeed to pass the night in your elbow-chair.”

Giuseppe’s brow grew dark as midnight, and, as I quailed under his fierce scowl, I gave myself up for lost. It was an awful moment. He seemed undecided how to act, and stood in the middle of the room with his arms folded, his eyes fixed keenly upon me, and without uttering a syllable. At last, he said—“If it’s only fire you want, that you can have in your own chamber as well as here. I’ll call up Bettina.”

“By no means; you shall not disturb the house on my account,” I said, a sort of intuitive feeling coming over me, that it was only by staying below I had any chance of escaping with life.

The ruffian appeared to be struck at my pertinacity, but he contested the point no farther; and his coarse features relaxed from their frown into a grim smile, as he said—“Have your own way, then; if the lodging should turn out un-

comfortably"—and he laid a peculiar emphasis on the word—"if the lodging should turn out uncomfortably, you have only yourself to blame for it. We foresters wear sharp knives, and make no more of lopping off an informer's ears than we should of cutting a dog's tail. You understand, I dare say; and, if you do not, the better for you. At all events, you are forewarned; and so good night, signor."

Not one syllable of this did I understand, nor did I waste a single moment of the precious time in trying to unravel it, but, the instant his back was fairly turned, began to think how I could best escape. My first efforts were directed to the outer-door; it was fast locked and the key taken away. I next tried the window-shutter, which was defended by two strong iron bars, crossing each other at an acute angle, and fastened by a spring. Here too I was baffled. For one weary hour did I labour to discover the secret of the spring, pressing and pulling at the bars in every direction, yet not daring to use any great violence lest the noise should alarm my enemies, who, I doubted not, were sufficiently on the alert. And so it proved.

While I was still struggling with this obstacle to my escape, I was alarmed by the sound of footsteps close to the door. So quickly, as well as silently, had the approach been managed, that I had scarcely time to fling myself into the arm-chair, and feign to be fast asleep, before Giuseppe again made his appearance, carrying in his hand a dark lantern.

“Signor!” he muttered in a low tone, like one who wishes to know whether the closed eyes of the person, he is watching, betokens slumber, and fears, if it be so, to disturb it —“Signor!”

Instead of making any answer, I drew my breath more deeply, and heard him mutter—
“Good! he sleeps.”

What I felt at this moment it passes the best powers of language to describe, and yet I had the courage, or, it may be, the exceeding cowardice, to keep my eyes fast shut, though I heard him stealing softly to my chair. There was a rustling sound behind me; my ear, sharpened by terror, told me that he was raising both his arms, and I expected nothing less than to receive his stiletto in my breast,

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when, instead of the deadly blow, I felt a cloak gently flung over my face, no doubt to prevent the light from striking on my eyes, and waking me from my supposed slumber. He then unlocked the door and gave a low whistle, which was answered with the same caution, and in a few minutes there was the tread of many feet and the whispering of voices.

As well as I could judge, for I did not venture to remove the cloak, about eight or ten men entered the kitchen, when the door was again carefully locked and bolted. There appeared to be some dissension amongst them respecting myself; I could hear the word "spy" frequently repeated, though they scarcely spoke above their breath, and their voices carried an angry sound with them, till at last the dispute seemed to be ended by the authority of Giuseppe, who said loud enough for my anxious ears to drink in every syllable—

"No, no, lads; time enough for that. Let us despatch the other job first."

Merciful powers! it would be time enough to cut my throat when they had secured their more important victims! I had better—yea,

ten times better—have braved the fury of Sir Phelim.

My fate was thus deferred, though it was probable the respite would not be a long one, if chance, or my own wit, did not supply me with the means of escape in the interval. Faint as this hope necessarily was, it yet served to prevent me from betraying myself. I sate without the slightest motion till I heard something like the lifting up of a heavy trap-door, and then curiosity, stronger even than terror,—if indeed it were not the child of it,—made me partly remove the cloak from my face, and I saw several well armed men pass by a secret flight of steps into a vault below the kitchen.

No sooner had Giuseppe, who was the last man descending, closed the trap-door after him, than I thought it time to renew my efforts to escape. Without wasting a moment upon the shutters or the outer door, which from my late experience I knew would be to little purpose, I caught up the lamp from the table, and, hastening into the passage, bent my course in a direction opposite to that leading to my bed-room. This unlucky choice, however, had nearly proved

my ruin, and, as it was, led to no very pleasant result. Before I was aware of it, I stumbled upon a door that stood half open, and the person within, being awake, was roused by the glimpse of my lamp ere I had time to shade it, and called out—"Is it you, Beppo?"

I retained just sufficient presence of mind, instead of flying, to reply "Hush!" imitating with infinite nicety the gruff tones of my host.

But, capital as the assumption was, it did not seem to satisfy the confounded querist, who again called out—"Santa Maria! what ails thee, husband? have you been making too free with the wine-pot again, that you stand croaking there like an old frog with the asthma? If you don't make the more haste, that prying guest of yours, that you must needs pick up in the forest—the saints only know why at such a time—will wake before all's done, and then see what a fine pickle we shall be in. I am sure he half suspects us already."

Will any one condemn me for a fancier of vain terrors, a dreamer of ideal dangers, after such convincing words as these? was not the

import sufficiently palpable to convince the dullest understanding, even if the other pregnant proofs had not gone before as already narrated?

The extremity of the danger made me adopt a most desperate resolution. I rushed into the room, pistol in hand, and ordered the woman, who, it seems, had not risen from her bed, not to stir, nor utter a single cry, on peril of her life. Staggered by my determined air, the hag lay perfectly still, while I gagged her to prevent her raising any alarm, and with her own garters bound her hand and foot to the bed-post, an act not only of necessity but of retributive justice. While it secured me against any chance of her raising the house, it was in some sort a punishment, though infinitely too mild, for her murderous intentions, so plainly expressed when she mistook me for her husband.

Having thus happily extricated myself from so great a peril, I resumed my flight, and followed the windings of the passage, till I found myself in a room, which, from the colour of the walls, I had no doubt was the blue cham-

ber, first proposed to me by my treacherous host. At any other time the idea of intruding upon a spot said to be visited by an inhabitant from the other world would have filled me with serious alarms; but now, so occupied was my mind with the thought of my assassins, I felt, comparatively speaking, but little fear on that score. "I am not quite sure," said I, half aloud, "whether the appearance of a ghost would be a thing so much to be dreaded under my present circumstances; for aught I know he might keep away more unpleasant visitors." But let no man even whisper such thoughts to himself, lest the devil, who is ever on the watch, should serve him as he did me, and take him at his word. Scarcely had I spoken, or rather whispered,—for I am sure I did not raise my voice beyond a whisper,—this half fancy, half wish, when the tapestry became violently agitated, a portion of it seemed to divide, and the spectre of the blue chamber stood before me, bearing in his hand that customary, but somewhat inconsistent, appendage for a spirit, a lighted lamp. The heart sank within me as I gazed in speechless wonder at this visitant from

another world, who, like many other persons of mere flesh and blood, though his presence was invited, was by no means welcome now that he had come. I will not attempt to describe him, for how can mortal language define things immortal? Enough, his appearance was such as to fill me with awe, and for a long time we remained staring at each other in silence, I being too much alarmed to open the conversation, and the spectre or spirit, with the usual punctilio of such visitors, not choosing to speak till he was spoken too.

At last, however, I collected so much courage as to address him, but not being versed in the etiquette of such a tête-à-tête, I could think of no better formula than that prescribed by Shakspeare in his "Hamlet." If it were a proper mode of address from a prince to his defunct father, I thought it could not be other than respectful from me to a stranger, who, if ghosts are to be estimated, like the living, from their outward garments, was certainly not a ghost of quality. Accordingly, not omitting the preparatory start, as I had seen it practised on the stage, I saluted him with "Angels and

ministers of grace defend us! Art thou a spirit from heaven or goblin damned? be thy intents wicked or charitable? Speak! Oh, speak!"

"I will speak," replied the ghost, "and well is it for you that you have spoken, or before the cock crows you would have shared my dark prison-house. Follow me."

Though by no means certain that my supernatural friend might not be "a goblin damned," in which case I could expect nothing less than that he was leading me by the shortest cut to the place with an ugly name, it yet required less courage to accept than to refuse his invitation. Accordingly, I followed as he bade me, and, to judge from the facility with which he found his way through the old ruins, up stairs and down stairs, threading a multitude of passages that seemed to have been made for no other purpose than to perplex strangers, the ghost must assuredly have been an inhabitant of the villa in his life-time, if indeed he had not been the architect also.

I began to think the building must be endless, or that we were walking in a circle,

so long had this mysterious wandering continued, when, upon our entering what appeared to have once been an oratory, my guide suddenly vanished with a loud cry, seeming to my eyes to sink through the floor. But to what purpose had he brought me hither? On feeling my way round the walls, for the room was as dark as Erebus, and the wind had extinguished my lamp some time before, I could find no outlet, and concluded we had got to the extremity of the building. If so, I had not much improved my situation.

Not many minutes, however, had elapsed, before I found good reason to say, "the ghost was an honest ghost," and to attribute the salvation of my life to his having guided me to this distant part of the ruins. In the very midst of my despair at being placed in such a situation by his interference, I was roused to a very different estimate of things by hearing the voice of Beppo urging on his banditti in the pursuit of me.

"Stand you by the outer door, Gianni, and, if he offers to pass you, down with him, lad. Slice him like an onion. And do you, Blaise,

give a look to the old cellar, while Paullo and I scour to the rooms above. A fine troublesome customer Master Momolo has brought upon our hands, but he shall pay for it if there 's faith in a good oak cudgel, or I am no true woodman."

For more than half an hour I endured the pains of purgatory, while the search after me continued with unabated rancour, as was evident from the shouting and trampling which were kept up all that time. More than once I gave myself up for lost, so close did the pursuit come upon my hiding-place, and fortunate was it for me that my lamp had gone out, for it would assuredly have betrayed me when I least expected it. At one time they were no farther off than the next room, and the light of their torches gleamed through the chinks of the old wall, but some happy fatality led them off again in an opposite direction, and, from the total silence, that followed soon after, I concluded they must have given up the pursuit.

This relief to my over-excited feelings came in good time. I could not have endured this horrible suspense many minutes longer, and, as

it was, I sank exhausted on the floor, unable to take any farther measures for my safety. Perhaps, after all, it was much better that I could not, such at least was my view of the matter when, in silence and darkness, I was able to reflect upon it with the composure that I had wanted during the terrors of their pursuit. In my present hiding-place, I was safe for the night, while, if I ventured to stir out in the hope of escape, it was a hundred to one that I did not, from the want of the necessary local knowledge, stumble again into the hands of my pursuers. Consoling myself, therefore, as well as I could with this reflection, I deferred any farther measures till daylight should come to my assistance ; and, stretching myself at length upon the floor, with my cloak for a pillow, I gave way to the feelings of drowsiness which naturally succeeded to such excitement.

My dreams, as they too often are, were full of horrible imaginings. The traitor, Giuseppe, haunted me in a thousand different forms, in all of which the ludicrous was strangely blended with the terrific. I fancied myself a boy at school again. I was fagging might and main

at the first rule of syntax, which, somehow or other, my memory refused to retain; and there stood my old master in his flowered morning-gown, rod in hand, ready to castigate one extremity for the faults of the other, and all the time my old master was not himself, but Beppo. The agony of this dream was too great for human sufferance. I woke with a loud yell, and found to my cost that the vision had a strong relish of reality about it. There was my host, with his wife, his daughter, Bettina, and a stout young fellow in a fustian jacket, all variously armed, according to their several degrees and occupations, with either broom, whip, or mopstick, an array which accounted tolerably well for the flagellation in my dream.

“Are not you a pretty scoundrel?” asked mine host, at the same time taking the measure of my shoulders with his dog-whip.

“To rob an honest man in his own house!” said the fustian jacket;—and his whip followed in the same track as Beppo’s.

“To misuse your kind hostess, you abominable villain!” said the wife;—and thwack! her broomstick descended on my devoted head.

Thwack! thwack! came the mops of her daughter and Bettina.

“My good friends!—my kind friends!—” I exclaimed; “take my money, take all I have, but spare my life.”

But all my cries were to no purpose; the blows showered upon me thick as hail from all quarters; and, had not some travellers come up, I should hardly have escaped to record the story of my disasters. At the sight of this party, which consisted of an elderly-looking man and four stout followers, the banditti desisted from their attack, though, when I heard Giuseppe welcome the stranger familiarly under the name of Doctor Giacomo, I had little hope of a favourable result. Even if they were not in league, which I much doubted, it was still to be expected, the man being his acquaintance, and of course favourably disposed, that my false host would make good his story; and so it turned out.

“In the name of all the saints,” said the pretended doctor, “what has this honest man done, that you cudgel him so unmercifully?”

"Honest!" exclaimed Giuseppe.

"Honest!" cried the young fellow in the fustian jacket.

"Honest!" screamed the three women in chorus.

The whole band of assassins lifted up their eyes and hands with such a well-affected air of astonishment as might have deceived the keenest judge that ever presided at the Old Bailey Sessions.

"He has robbed me of a silver tankard!" said the host.

"And ten silver spoons," said the wife.

"What wretches!" thought I to myself; "since they cannot rob and murder me, they want to hang me for a thief."

"Besides," added the old fury, "gagging me and binding me to the bed-posts. Only see, doctor, here is the print in black and blue on my poor arms!—the villain!—after such a supper as I cooked for him, too."

With this she again flourished her mop-stick, which seemed to serve as a signal for the other three women. They answered it promptly with similar to kens of defiance, and the whole troop

of furies was advancing gallantly to the attack, when it pleased the doctor to interpose.

"Iram cohíbe, old lady; or, for your better understanding, 'skim the vessel of your wrath,' which seems to be boiling over just now. And you, too, my little Laura," chucking the daughter under the chin, "depose that awful broom, which you wield so dextrously; or put it to its legitimate use of waging war against the spiders, and spare the poor gentleman's cerebellum."

"Don't talk to me of the gentleman's belly," exclaimed the old hag; "it has eaten me up as fine a pullet as ever you set eyes upon; not that I bear a base mind for the matter, or speak it grudgingly; but to be used as I have been this blessed night by such a sneaking villain, who has not the heart of a mouse in his body!—Only look, Master Giacomo, see what fine thanks I have got!"

And, whipping off her garters in a trice with as little ceremony as if no one had been present, she bared her brown withered legs to Doctor Giacomo's inspection. For my own part, I was utterly confounded at the matchless hypo-

crisy of the scene, and really began to fancy that I had escaped the perils of assassination only to be hanged after all for felony, without benefit of clergy. At last, when the clamour had a little subsided, I begged to be favoured with a hearing.

"That is no more than fair," said the doctor; "and, truth to say, friend Beppo, the signor looks not like a 'snapper-up of unconsidered trifles.' I'll wager my next fee against your silver poculum—your tankard—whose loss you bemoan so, that there's some mistake in this matter."

"Ah! the silver tankard!" replied Giuseppe, groaning, "I only wish I had him safe in my corner-cupboard again; it would be some time before I'd put him into any such jeopardy."

"Don't take on so piteously, Master Beppo," said the doctor; "perhaps I may hit on the means to conjure back this runaway piece of silver. But, to begin with the beginning, a practice I heartily recommend to all who want to see the end of any thing, let us hear what you have to say, signor."

Thus encouraged, I proceeded to tell my story,

fully convinced that if my judge were really an honest man, which was more than I expected, the relation must overwhelm my accusers. I repeated with minuteness the various speeches made by Giuseppe ; pointed out their concealed meaning, as I had at first interpreted them ; and showed how strongly I was borne out in my ideas by the subsequent fact.

No actor could have portrayed amazement better than did my faithless host and his family during the first part of this detail. "Santa Marias," "Diavolos," and sundry other sonorous ejaculations, burst from them at every fresh proof I brought forward of their atrocity. But this only inspired me with greater eloquence. I went on, expatiating on each fact, and dissecting each word, with the minuteness of a special pleader, who tears to pieces the conduct of some unhappy culprit, well knowing that both fame and fee depend upon conviction. To my great surprise, however, the more I harangued and the more pregnant became my proofs, the more decidedly did my auditors exchange their first looks of amazement for ill-repressed laughter. The women tittered, mine host smiled, the

young man in fustian grinned, and the doctor's lip curled up after the sardonic fashion. This piqued me; alarmed as I was for my eventual safety, I did not choose to be treated like a child and to have my tale made a subject of ridicule, as if I were one of those simple-minded travellers who, as the proverb says, make mountains of mole-hills. Assuming, therefore, an air of dignity, to give the greater weight to my words, I said, "Believe me, sir, you are deceived in these people; notwithstanding they want to make the whole appear no more than a joke, I can assure you it is any thing but a laughing matter. I saw the banditti in the kitchen—I saw them open the trap-door"—

But at this part of my story I was interrupted by a general shout of laughter.

"Don't be angry," said the doctor, seeing that I was to the full as wroth as I dared to be; "don't be angry, signor, but listen to me while I let you into the secrets of the trap-door and the banditti."

"Doctor!" cried Giuseppe, hastily, "would you ruin me?"

"Tilly vally, man," said the doctor, "you have nothing to fear on that score; the signor

is an English traveller, and cares no more about your smuggling concerns than the Cham of Tartary; for, to tell you the truth," he added, turning to me, "our worthy friend here, though indifferently honest in other matters, pays no more regard to the revenue laws than a Jew does to Sunday. But let that pass; you can easily guess now who your banditti were, and the use of the secret cellar?"

"And the man who came in at the window?" I exclaimed, with more warmth than prudence, "who was he?"

"Myself," replied the young fellow in fustian.

"The devil it was!" said mine host.

"Yes; I meant to—nay, it's of no use, Bettina; all must out, rather than uncle Beppo should come to any harm. The fact is, I meant to pay a visit to Bettina, not being aware of the change of rooms."

"And pray," asked I, incredulously, "whom am I to thank for the vision in the blue chamber?"

At this question, Giuseppe and his family crossed themselves with every symptom of horror—fine hypocrites!

"The figure," I continued, "in the slouched hat, blue cloak"—

"And red hose," added Giacomo, eagerly piecing out my sentence.

I was thunderstruck — "The very same, though how you should come to the knowledge of"—

But, without waiting to hear me out, the doctor shouted triumphantly, "We have him! we have him! Away with you, Pietro; scour the ruins, Luigi. Via, my lads, and put feathers to your heels, for if he once escape from us into the forest, we may have another night of it."

Away scampered the pretended doctor and his myrmidons, for, that it was a pretence, I had no doubt whatever. I was not to be duped by any of their tricks or explanations, and felt that the whole scene had been got up merely to cloak the bloody occupation of the banditti, as they were afraid I might otherwise betray them into the hands of justice, while yet they did not dare to murder me in the broad day-light. But, though such was my conviction, I thought it most prudent to seem satisfied. "I am perfectly contented," I said, "with your explanation

of the night's mysteries, and I pledge you my honour I will never breathe a syllable about them to any human being."

"I believe that, if I believe nothing else," said mine host, with a sarcastic sneer.

"You may, indeed," I repeated still more emphatically.

"I were an infidel to doubt it," said Giuseppe.

"And now, before I take my leave of you, allow me to pay,—no, not pay,—but to testify my gratitude by offering you these few pieces of gold."

"I'll allow no such thing," he replied, bluntly; "I have already told you this is no inn, nor am I a man to call a reckoning for a night's board or a night's lodging; but, before you take your leave, as you phrase it, I must be sure you don't take my silver tankard at the same time."

"And the ten silver spoons, husband; don't forget the ten silver spoons."

"Here he is! we have him!" shouted the doctor, who now re-appeared upon the scene. "Bring him along, lads. Here is your ghost, signor,—and your thief, Beppo,—and my mad-patient,—all in one—three faces under one hood.

We found him moaning and groaning in the room under the turret oratory, where he seems to have got by a way of his own, videlicet, through the rotten floor. By the bye, Beppo, the rats and the damp are playing the deuce with this castle of yours; if you don't leave it soon, I shall have to dig you out of the ruins some windy morning.—What? you would give us the slip again, would you? draw that cord a little tighter about his arms, Blaise—tighter yet—you have given us trouble enough, my fine fellow; but, basta—you fast a month for it on bread and water, with a handsome pair of bracelets to your feet, and a smart allowance of whip to refresh your memory.”

During this long tirade of Signor Giacomo's, which, I must confess, was delivered with so much appearance of truth as almost to deceive myself, the woman had pounced upon the recovered silver like an eagle upon its quarry, and Giuseppe, turning to me, pretended to treat the whole affair as a tissue of laughable blunders on either side.

“Faith, signor,” he said, “I am heartily sorry for having handled you so roughly, but we had

all drunk of the same cup, I fancy ; and, since you took me for a robber, you may the more readily forgive my blunder in taking you for a thief. After all, there is no great harm done, at least not more than our doctor here will easily set to rights with two pennyworth of ointment."

Here the doctor broke in with "Favete linguis—hold your tongue, Beppo ; I'll have no interlopers in the shop, no meddlers with the mysteries of the trade. What should you know of ointments except in the case of a sick hound, or a horse that has got the glanders ? Let me feel your pulse, signor."

"Not the least occasion," I said, anxious to get away from them, if that were possible ; "I feel no inconvenience whatever from the—the—the late affair, and, were Momolo returned, should be glad to set off with as little delay as might be."

"Set off again !" exclaimed Giuseppe ; "that were to shame our hospitality for ever. No, no, my worthy guest ; you'll spend a day or so in the old ruins, if it were only to convince yourself that we don't make a practice of cutting throats"—

“Except in the way of business,” interrupted Giacomo. “But I forgot, signor, it wont do to jest with you on such matters, seeing that you have a marvellous fancy for interpreting things after a fashion of your own. Let me, therefore, make it known to you that our worthy host excepts the human genus from his practice; his scientific knife meddles with nothing of higher quality than the wild boar or the red deer, and upon these he is licensed to operate by virtue of his office.”

“Yes, yes, doctor, I leave the human bipeds, whether dead or living, to your care. But come, signor, you must not refuse to be our guest for one day at least, or I shall fancy you bear an angry will to us on the score of our night’s blunders, and I should not like to part on such terms either.”

“Well advised, honest Beppo,” said the doctor; “the whole faculty in conclave could not counsel more to the purpose. List to him, sir stranger; you have come abroad *procul dubio*—beyond doubt—to see sights, or it may be to compound a book, for you English are desperate tourists, always travelling well armed,

not with spear in rest, but with pen 'in hand. If so, this is locus locorum, the very spot for you, seeing that it has seldom been visited by any of your countrymen, and has all the materials out of which your quartos are concocted. Here we have, as you may see, abundance of mountains, forests, torrents, and ruins, and, I dare say, if you particularly wished it, we could accommodate you with the sight of a bandit in full uniform."

"How you do go on, Master Giacomo!" exclaimed the old woman; "there are no such vermin in these parts, I thank heaven and the saints for it."

"Then," said the doctor, "your excellent guest, whose fancy is of the quickest, shall fashion a robber for himself out of the shadow of a rock or the stump of some old tree; it will answer your purpose just as well, signor; and, moreover, Beppo is the very man to be your help in this matter. He knows every inch of the country for thirty miles round!"

"That I do," said Giuseppe, "and most ready am I to be the signor's guide. Or if it like him better—and to my mind it is the more

rational way of spending one's time—I'll lend him as good a gun as ever brought down deer, and we'll have a day's sport upon the mountains. How say you, signor?"

But finely as the snare was woven, I was not to be so deceived—

"Fare ye well, gentlemen," quothed I, putting spurs to my horse.

"Adieu, Signor," replied the whole gang with villanous shouts of laughter—

The rascals!—but I was safe—safe; a few hours' hard riding brought me to the town, which had been my original destination. Oh, how my supper relished after the events of the day! But the best of all the dishes that were set before me was a letter borne upon a salver. It came from England—"Hurrah! I may return to my Penates,—my household gods—Sir Phelim O'Connor is dead—shot in a duel,—blessed be the ball that gave him his quietus."

THE CHAMBER

OF

THE PALE LADY.

EVERY old mansion of any size or repute, that stands away from cities, and has the good-luck to outlast a few generations, is sure to have its legends. They gather and grow about the original truth, like ivy about ruins, till they have completely hidden the substance that supports them. Some of these reliques of past ages have their haunted chambers ; others have their warning spirits to announce the approaching death of the lord of the mansion ; and not a

few retain the dim lustre of chivalrous daring and warlike achievement. My father's hall had its chamber of the Pale Lady, a name given to a particular room from the presence of a certain portrait painted on a panel of the oaken wainscot.

The lady in question was of a very small figure, and, though beautiful, had a complexion of singular paleness, while there was a startling wildness about her large black eyes—at least, all those said so who saw the portrait after having heard her story. For myself, I perfectly well remember that she had inspired me, when a boy, with so much awe that I never ventured into the room occupied by her portrait, except in broad daylight, and then I always took good care to have a companion.

Even now, when time has destroyed all other youthful fancies, mercilessly banning and banishing the spirits, black, white, and grey, that once delighted while they terrified me, I feel a sort of lingering veneration for the Pale Lady, and find a pleasure—childish, perhaps, but still a pleasure—in gazing at the old picture when the moon shines full upon it. Then is the

hour for such a tale ; shorn of those circumstances of time and place, which have made it so striking to my imagination, I fear its shadows will become as substantial, and as little apt to awe, as the ghost of Banquo upon the modern stage, represented, as he always is, by some portly feeder, who seems sent on to vouch for the good living of folks in the other world. But, not to draw out the grace much longer than the meal, thus runs the legend.

QUEEN Mary had been on the throne of England almost a twelvemonth, and had already begun that career of blood which has given an odious celebrity to her name. Thus encouraged by the royal example, the zeal of the Catholics grew hotter and hotter every day at the fires they had kindled for the spiritual benefit of their Protestant brethren, till, at last, there was little safety for the heretic in their neighbourhood. Much, however, in the more distant countries, depended upon the characters of the leading individuals professing the predominant

faith; if they chanced to be tolerant, there was comparative impunity for the Protestant, who, if he did not make too intrusive a display of his principles, might then hope to pass unnoticed.

Luckily for the neighbourhood of Ivy Hall, Sir Hugh Trevor, though in other respects a good Catholic, was of this better class of spirits, so that the faggot had not been kindled within the circle of his influence. But to no one, not even to the father confessor of the family, did this tolerant disposition give so much displeasure, as to his own lady mother; so deadly was her hatred of the heretics that, had she loved her son a grain less than she actually did, it was an even chance she had used her influence with Bonner to warm his zeal by the help of the stake and the faggot.

As it was, Dame Margaret contented herself with attributing his lukewarmness to the bad example of an early friend, a certain Sir Robert Lonsdale, who had latterly abandoned his faith for the uncourtly and dangerous creed of the Reformers. On him, therefore, who was many years older than Sir Hugh, she poured down all her wrath, and he in a great measure served

as a sort of conductor to carry off its lightnings from the head of the near offender.

Such was the state of affairs at Ivy Hall, when one night, just as the mother and son were about to leave the supper-table for their respective bed-rooms, a loud and hasty ringing was heard at the great gate-bell.

"Sancte Maria!" exclaimed the old lady, crossing herself in much trepidation, and sinking back again into the arm-chair, from which she had just risen — "what unhallowed thing is abroad at this hour?"

"There is no occasion for any alarm," said Sir Hugh. "If the visitor be a friend, he is welcome, late as the hour is; if an enemy, we are strong enough, I hope, to protect ourselves."

"Against such an enemy the arm of the flesh is all too weak," replied Dame Margaret, her head shaking as much from her fear as from the effects of a slight stroke of palsy.

Again the bell rang, and yet more violently than at first, its shrill clamours seeming to be blown about the house by the wind as it howled in fierce and fitful eddies.

"A plague upon the coward knaves!" exclaimed Sir Hugh; "tall fellows, and stout are they in the broad day; but at night, a shadow would start the best of them. Not one, I'll be sworn for it, will leave the hall-fire, unless I drive him from the ingle-corner."

"They believe in a devil," solemnly observed Dame Margaret, in whom even her extreme terror could not for a single instant tame the fierceness of her bigotry.

Sir Hugh made no reply, but seizing a lamp, hurried out to enquire into the cause of this nocturnal visit, while the old lady, left alone with her terrors, mumbled prayer upon prayer, and invoked all the saints in the calendar to her assistance. Perhaps, the good folks listened to so fervent a votary, for it was not long before her fears were silenced by the return of her son, who half supported, half carried, into the room a beautiful little female, about sixteen years of age, apparently exhausted by the fatigues of a long journey.

At the first glance, Dame Margaret was much scandalized in seeing such service rendered by the Lord of Ivy Hall, and the inheritor of so

many broad acres, to one apparently so humble, for the maiden wore the garb of a wandering minstrel, and carried a lute suspended at her back by a plain, green ribbon. Nor was this feeling much diminished when, in a few hurried words, Sir Hugh committed the damsel to her own immediate care, begging, and it might be almost said commanding, that she should receive every attention her situation required.

“She is noble, I hope,” said the old lady, “or at least of such gentle blood as may warrant the service of your mother.”

A faint smile passed over the pale features of the stranger, and Sir Hugh answered hastily, if not harshly,—“The daughter of a friend—of a near and dear friend ”

“And her name?” asked Dame Margaret.

“To-morrow, mother,” replied Sir Hugh,—“to-morrow you shall know all—all, at least, that is befitting for you to know.”

There was something in the tone of this qualified promise that awed the querist into an unwilling silence. Never before had she seen her son in so uncompromising a mood, and the

very novelty of the occurrence vouched for its cavern being of no ordinary a nature.

But days elapsed after this eventful night, and still there appeared no signs of the promised to-morrow; the utmost amount of information that her pertinacity could extract was only this—the stranger's name was Emmeline. To add to her discomfort, as the character of the little damsel unfolded itself, which it did not fail to do in a very short time, she saw reason to fear that an esprit follet had taken up its residence in her orthodox domicile. The Pale Lady, as she now began to be called from the extreme fairness of her complexion, was no less capricious in her movements than Will-o'-the-Wisp himself, and took the same delight in leading those, who followed her, into trouble. Hence, it was no wonder if the servants, who were often the subjects of these pranks, became convinced that they had got a fairy, or some elementary spirit, for an inmate—a conviction which, when the first sentiment of fear had worn off, did not make the stranger less welcome to them. She became to their fancy a sort of household spirit, a freakish elf, such as Robin Good-fellow had been to the cotters of

yet earlier times, full of humorous pranks indeed, but friendly in temper, and never mischievously disposed except when provoked by the ill-will or thwartings of her mortal companions. When once the little maiden grew conscious of this belief in her supernatural nature, she seemed rather to delight in it than to wish to conceal her fairy origin; the milk was often found churned, and the hearth swept, without the help of human hands, or at least of those hands whose proper occupation it would have been, and a silver sixpence would occasionally be dropped into the shoe of the careful housemaid. Then too her dress, however it might vary in the fashion of its shape, was invariably green, the traditional colour of the fairies. But the most decided proof, and there were more than one who could swear to it, was that her figure threw no shadow in the sunlight, and received no reflection from any mirror. This strange tale, which she did not fail to encourage, at last reached the ears of Dame Margaret, who, with mingled feelings of horror and curiosity, determined to put the truth of it to the test. For this purpose she summoned

the Pale Lady to a meeting in her private chamber, where stood the only mirror in the house, looking-glasses not being so common a thing in those days as they have since grown to be with us. But to no mandate of the kind could the little damsel be brought to lend an ear, word it as the messengers would, either in the way of threat or of gentle invitation. She was, it seemed, in one of her most dogged moods, or else suspected the cause of the summons, and had no mind to submit herself to the ordeal.

“My lady begs you will come directly,” said the abigail, repeating her unnoticed message for the third time.

Emmeline gave no reply, but opened her large black eyes to their utmost extent, and stared at the ambassadress in a way that made her feel any thing but comfortable.

“Heaven bless us!” muttered the alarmed abigail; “I have often heard of the Evil Eye, and, if ever there was such a thing, it is upon me now. I wish I were safely out of the room. Miss Emmeline”—this was in an louder key—“Miss Emmeline, will it please you to come? my mistress loves contradiction as little as any lady in Christendom.”

Hereat the elfin damsel burst into a long unearthly laugh, that with every moment grew wilder and wilder, till it well nigh reached a shriek. There was no standing this. The soubrette uttered as loud a scream as her lungs would admit of, and fairly fled, banging the door to, as a sort of barrier between herself and the laughing goblin.

It may be easily imagined with what feelings Dame Margaret received this account. There was something of fear in her voice, and more of irritation mingled with excited curiosity, as she despatched a second message by Annette, her favourite maid, who was specially employed about her own person. This renewed summons was full of authority, and dignified resentment, proportioned to the confidential character of the person bearing it.—“Tell the young woman,” she said, “that Dame Margaret Trevor, the lady of this mansion, requires the immediate presence of her nameless guest. If she has no respect for the hostess, who affords her an unwilling asylum, she at least owes the duty of youth to my grey hairs.”

Annette had no great fancy for this mission,

which, as it implied offence to the object of it, might not be altogether without peril to herself. But there was no choice, and besides she had naturally more courage, though not less superstition, than her companions. Down, therefore, she went, when, if she found nothing to try her boldness of spirit, she saw quite enough to astonish her, with all her previous experience of the little damsel's vagaries.—Was the Pale Lady sad for the past, or doubtful for the future?—neither the one nor the other; she was dancing away as if the spirit of some frantic marabout had possessed her, at every bound almost touching the ceiling, and whirling round like the little motes that dance in the sunbeams. Nothing that Annette could say availed to stop her for a moment; and when, as a last resource, she seized the hand of the emphatic dancer, so far from being able to stay her flight, she was herself borne along in the same giddy round, much after the manner of a straw caught up and tossed about by a whirlwind. In the midst of all this hurly-burly entered Dame Margaret, whose impatience could no longer endure the delay op-

posed to her curiosity. Her presence gave a new turn to the scene. A stranger would have fancied that he saw a merry school-girl detected in some forbidden game of romps by the unexpected appearance of her mistress, so suddenly did the Pale Lady break off the dance, and so motionless did she stand, after having dropt a profound courtsy 'to Dame Margaret. In the meanwhile, the unlucky Annette, released from the supporting hold of her companion, plumped down at once upon the floor, where she sat with her clothes carefully drawn over her feet, the very image of comical despair.

"What is the meaning of these witches' saturnalia?" said the old lady, her angry glances wandering from the one to the other of the delinquents. "Are we all mad, I ask?"

"It is the full of the moon," replied the little damsel with malicious gravity; "yet I would fain hope for the best. You feel not giddier than you are wont, dear lady?"

"I sent to request your presence," said Dame Margaret, not perceiving, or not choos-

ing to notice, the lurking malice of this tender inquiry. "Perhaps, now that the dancing mood is over, you will be pleased to follow me to my chamber, where we may have some private conference on matters that touch your repute as a Christian maiden."

"It is too late," said the Pale Lady laughing.

"Too late!" exclaimed the elder dame.

"Too late," repeated the Pale Lady—and then sang, or rather chaunted, with a look of peculiar archness—

The word has been spoken,

The magical token!

And the mirror is broken.

Hoo! har, har!—hoo!

The repetition of this familiar witch-burthen sounded to the orthodox ears of Lady Margaret little better than actual blasphemy. She was perfectly confounded, and, before she could find either breath or sense to reply, in rushed the abigail who had been left in the chamber of the mirror, wringing her hands, and exclaiming in a voice of terror, "Oh, my lady! my lady!

—it 's not my fault—pray be not angry with me—it 's not my fault.”

“What is not your fault?” said Dame Margaret. “Speak out plainly, child—or has the madness seized you, too, who used to be so reasonable?”

“The mirror, my lady!—the mirror! it is broken—dashed into a thousand pieces—and not a piece so large as a silver groat.”

“How strange,” exclaimed the little damsel in a tone of earnestness, by no means usual with her. “I did but play upon you when I hinted that the glass was broken, and lo you now!—Cassandra herself could not have prophesied to better purpose. Rightly says the proverb, ‘Many a true word is spoken in jest.’”

There was something in the glance of her eye strangely at variance with her words and with the tone in which they were uttered. It jarred most unpleasantly on the nerves of Dame Margaret. And now it would have been naturally supposed that the old lady, bigoted and fearful as she was, would have taken measures, without delay, for ridding the

house of so ambiguous a being. And such, indeed, for a while, seemed to be her purpose. The servants were ordered to quit the room, and, as their curiosity still kept them listeners at the door, they could hear her voice loud in anger, though the thick oak would not allow them to distinguish the precise import of every word.

Then, as usual, came the sound of the lute, the little damsel's weapon of defence against all assaults, and which, by half the household, was supposed to be a talisman no less powerful in charming men's ears than the Syren's voice of old. In a very few minutes its melody had so effectually lulled the storm, that, on peeping through the keyhole, they saw her seated on a low stool, her head in the lap of dame Margaret, who looked down upon her with a smile of unwonted benevolence, while the withered hands played tremblingly with her dark ringlets, and smoothed their cluster from a brow, and temples that shone more dazzlingly white than ever.

"Now the saints defend us!" exclaimed the peeping abigail; "if ever fairy danced by moon-

light, there 's one hid in the body of that lute this blessed moment."

"I ever said so," replied the other.

And away they both hurried, partly in the fear lest a longer stay might betray them as listeners, and not less, it may be presumed, from a liberal spirit of communication, that could not remain satisfied till the rest of the household were as well acquainted with the whole story as themselves.

It will be asked what had become of Sir Hugh while Ivy Hall was thus being turned topsyturvy by the frolics of his nameless protégé. At first he had treated her as a child, seeming to take no little delight in her wild pranks; but it was soon evident that the child had grown a woman to his imagination, and, in his altered manner towards her, a shrewd spectator might have inferred that the Hall was likely, ere long, to have a new mistress. This passion, as sudden as it was vehement, was attributed to the magic influence of the lute, though it seemed that Sir Hugh had been equally able to captivate the Pale Lady without any such advantage. She loved him with no less ardour; and,

what might not have been so easily anticipated, made little scruple of showing it after her own wayward fashion, teasing and pleasing him in about an equal measure. Often it would happen that she exceeded even the endurance of a lover, and his wrath would settle down into a sullen mood that boded a determine rupture. On such occasions she always had recourse to her lute, which never failed to do its work, the shadows flying from his brow like mists before the sun when it breaks out from the clouds of April.

It will hardly be supposed that so keensighted a personage as Dame Margaret was all this time ignorant of a love-affair passing thus immediately under her eyes. How indeed should she be, when one of the parties at least took so little pains to conceal it? But her wrath smouldered quietly enough among the embers while there was a chance that it might end, like half the affairs of this kind, in vapour, for she was too prudent to provoke a different catastrophe by unseasonable opposition. "Say nothing,"—thus would she argue it in her own mind,—“say nothing, and this little spark will

go out of itself, when a puff of breath from me would kindle it into a flame. I must be silent !” Silent she was accordingly, refraining from words good or evil, though, as might be expected, such an excess of discretion cost her much heart-burning, till one day Sir Hugh gave her notice in due form that it was his intention to marry the little damsel ; then indeed she made herself ample amends for all her past forbearance, and poured forth such a storm of wrath on the devoted head of Sir Hugh that might well have excused him had he deviated from his purpose. But all in vain.

It is so easy to maintain a resolution when it happens to be in perfect consonance with our own desires !— women, however, do not so lightly give up any scheme it may once please them to take into their heads, even when it does not come recommended, as in the present instance, by the semblance at least of sound policy. Finding her son inflexible, to a degree that baffled all her powers of persuasion, she could only attribute an obstinacy so unusual with him to the influence of magical practices. It was clear that the Pale Lady had cast a spell

over him, and where could the secret source of the charm be better sought for than in the lute, the potency of which had been made apparent to every one of the household? To destroy the instrument then was to take the fang from the adder, and accordingly it was in her own mind doomed to destruction with the first opportunity.

When this would offer itself was another question, for the lute was the little maiden's constant companion, at home and abroad, on foot and on horseback, nor was she ever observed to put it from her except on one particular occasion, that recurred but once a month. This was on the full of the moon, when she never failed to find some pretence for walking alone in the neighbouring forest. At such times it was always remarked that she grew sadder and sadder as the day declined; her eyes would fill with tears, and she would gaze on Sir Hugh, when she thought herself unnoticed, with the anxious looks of one who was about to part from a near and dear friend for ever.

The motives for these nightly wanderings

none could discover, though there was no want of curiosity on the part of the inmates of Ivy Hall, who, to do them justice, had to the utmost extent of their courage exerted themselves to learn the secret. One or two of the boldest went so far, more than once, as to visit her supposed haunts on the following morning, when they found, or said they found, the print of feet, exactly corresponding to hers, in a certain planangware, or round as it is sometimes called, a relique from the times of the Druids; here, they had no doubt, she had been to meet the queen of the fairies, and obtain leave of absence for another month to dwell among the human mortals. In confirmation of this opinion, they remarked the wild joy she always evinced on her return, and the liberality with which she scattered silver—fairy silver no doubt—amongst the servants. But the more popular belief was that she went thither to worship the moon, from whom she received her power; and a cromlech, standing in an open part of the forest, was pointed out as the altar whereon she laid her monthly oblations. These offerings were supposed to be of an innocent

nature, from the fashion of the altar; it consisted, according to the usual form of such monuments, of an upright stone, and a second mass placed upon it horizontally, the latter having a cross rudely cut into it; and hence it was inferred that sylph, or fairy, or whatever else the little maiden might be, she could not belong to the evil spirits, since she was so familiar with the holy symbol.

The moon had now come to the full for the twelfth time since the eventful night that opened our tale, when Dame Margaret finally set about breaking the spell, as she deemed it, which had enthralled her son. By a coincidence, not perhaps very wonderful, seeing that kindred wits will jump together, Annette, the waiting-maid already mentioned, had her own plans of discovery reserved for this same evening. Having been more than once baffled by her fears, when attempting to follow the Pale Lady into the forest, she magnanimously resolved, while yet the daylight lasted, to take up a secret position near the cromlech, thus flinging herself at once upon the peril that she was afraid to meet with deliberation.

It was a close autumnal evening, and the thick sultry air hung heavily on the leaves and flowers that seemed to droop despondingly beneath its weight, the gnats and water-flies swarmed upon the still face of the pools, and there was uneasiness as well as listlessness in the motions of the cattle. At times a pale flash of lightning would show itself far off in the horizon, and the thunder would mutter at distant intervals, but not a drop of rain fell, and not a blade of grass stirred.

It would seem that even the Pale Lady, goblin or fairy as she was supposed to be, yet felt the influence of the hour, for, as she threaded the dingles and green alleys of the forest, there was none of the usual wild gaiety either in her subdued step or saddened features. The smile, that so seldom left her lips, was now absent; her wonted song was hushed, her looks expressed extreme anxiety, and ever and anon she would stop and lean against a broad-trunked oak, evidently not from weariness, but from reluctance to meet some dreaded object, to which she was of necessity advancing. But, linger as she might, she at length reached the

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open glade, in the middle of which stood the cromlech, with a flood of yellow light poured down upon it, as if the Druid stone had some secret power of attraction that drew the moonbeams to itself, while the sward about it lay in shadow. The heart of the fairy-wanderer, if fairy she was, beat fast as she neared the rugged pile, and her colourless cheek was tinted with that passing flush which hope lends when struggling for the mastery with fear. Again she paused, apparently to muster up resolution for the fated task, and then slowly resumed her onward march towards the cromlech. Annette, who saw every thing from her hiding-place, behind a clump of trees, always declared, when telling the tale, that she neither ran nor walked, but skimmed over the grass that waved beneath her feet as if it had been swept by the passing wind—"It was a strange sight," she would say, "to see the grass rippling in one narrow stripe, just like the sea when a squall walks over it, darkening and agitating its surface, while all beyond the immediate influence of the fitful breeze remains unruffled."

No sooner had the Pale Lady reached the

cromlech than she became sensible of a branch of misletoe lying on the horizontal, or upper stone. If not a subject of surprise, it was evidently unwelcome to her, for in the moment of perceiving it she uttered a faint scream, and sank against the monument, trembling and exhausted, like one who has received a sudden shock. With reluctant hand, after a brief pause, she took up the branch, her tears dropping fast upon it, hesitated awhile, then broke the stem in two and flung it from her as if it had been a serpent to sting and poison. It would seem that the storm, which had been so long gathering, had reserved itself till this particular moment; a loud peal of thunder, rolling from one end of the heavens to the other, gave the signal, when down it came in all its fury, the rain pouring, the blast howling, and the lightning wrapping the earth for many seconds together in one continued blaze. Then followed a longer, sharper crash, like the groan of convulsed nature, and in the next instant a thunder-bolt flew hurtling through the air, and shivered the cromlech into a thousand pieces. Annette stopped to see no more. With a speed

proportioned to her terror, she ran back to Ivy Hall, dashed by the astonished household, and hurried into the presence of her mistress for protection. But Dame Margaret had in the mean time met with her own proper causes of alarm, and to all appearance was as much in need of comfort as her terrified dependent. She stood gazing on the broken lute, her usually pale face yet paler from the workings of fear, her eyes dilated, and her aged limbs shaking in every joint. The ejaculations of Annette, neither low nor few, failed for a time to withdraw her attention from the ruins of the supposed talisman, and, when she did become sensible of the handmaiden's presence, it was only to give way to those feelings which had hitherto held her speechless.

"Dreadful!" was her first exclamation; "surely it was the going out of the fiend himself! Beata Maria, ora pro nobis—ora pro nobis!"—And she crossed herself repeatedly and fervently.

"Now all the saints be good unto us!" re-echoed Annette, her own previous terror visibly augmented by the fears of her mistress, though

she was unable to guess the precise cause of them.—“The saints be good unto us!”

“They *have* been,” cried Dame Margaret; “they *have* been. But reach me a chair; this shock has rudely shaken my old limbs, and I can stand no longer. The Holy Virgin—blessed be her name!—was with me, or I must have died on the spot. Awful times, Annette—awful times. The world grows worse as it grows older, and heaven alone knows what it all will end in; but, whatever it may be, thank God I shall not live to see it. I shall be safe in that home where the wicked cease to trouble.”

“In the name of all that’s terrible, what has happened?” exclaimed Annette.

“What indeed, girl! Oh, it was an awful moment when I dashed the accursed lute to pieces, and, with uplifted cross and counted beads, adjured him to fly—him, the unholy one, who had so long housed within it. Wot you, child, who it was that lent the strings their melody, witching all ears and hearts, that we none of us were the masters of our own will?—Apollyon, child—Apollyon! Ah! it is a wonder that my brain and sight still hold, and that my tongue can tell it to you.”

Dame Margaret placed her hands to her forehead, as if she thought to still the inward pain by their pressure. The sympathizing Annette, forgetting at the moment her own immediate cause of terror in anxiety for her mistress, burst into tears.

“My dear lady!” she cried; “my dear lady, you are ill. Let me go for help. Shall I call the servants?—shall I call Sir Hugh?”

“Heed it not, my good Annette. It is a passing pang only, and, with the blessing of the saints, will soon be over.—Mother in heaven! what now?”

This last exclamation was provoked by the loud yell of many voices from the rooms below, announcing some general cause of terror.

“Run, girl,” continued the old lady; “learn what new mischance has happened to excite this fearful outcry.”

But Annette had no occasion to leave the room to gain this knowledge. A single glance through the window, which opened on the fields between the house and the Severn, was sufficient to show the cause of the uproar.

“Merciful powers!” she said, or rather

shrieked—"see! see!—how the sparkles fly from his hoofs! how the flames stream from the creature's red nostrils!"

"Who?—what?" exclaimed the old lady.

"How they fly!—and the lightning flies after them, flash upon flash—it's aimed at them—only at them—and passes over the trees without scorching a single leaf."

"Who?—what?" reiterated Dame Margaret in the very agony of fear; "speak out, girl; tell me all—tell me at once, for I feel my senses are fast leaving me."

"Apollyon! the great fiend!—he rides off with the Pale Lady—there's not a speck of white on the black horse that carries them."

With that irresistible impulse which often compels our attention to objects of dread or loathing, Dame Margaret tottered forward to the window, and beheld the Pale Lady flying, or carried off, her clothes drenched with rain, and her loose hair streaming to the tempest. The speed of the coal-black horse outstripped the wind, and the rider who bestrode him appeared in the uncertain light to be of colossal stature. Their course lay for a few seconds

along the banks of the Severn, but suddenly, amidst the renewed rattling of thunder and the howling of wind, one long continued flash of the broadest and reddest lightning blazed about them, and in the next moment the horse was seen with his riders in the midst of the boiling waters. Then came a loud shriek of agony from the maiden, followed by a yell so fierce and unearthly that both the watchers instinctively closed their eyes in terror. It was an instant—only an instant—and, when they again looked out, nothing was visible on the river but the white foam of the angry billows.

Such is the accredited tradition of the Pale Lady, as I received it from the old servants of the family, and as it had been handed down to them from father to son through many generations. I must not, however, conceal the fact of there having been another version of the story, less allied to the marvellous, yet, perhaps, not a whit more real. According to this gloss, Sir Robert Lonsdale was the midnight visitor, who, being compelled to fly from England by the

tyranny of Queen Mary, could find no better way of disposing of his daughter than by entrusting her to the care of his young friend, Sir Hugh Trevor. That this gentleman professed the Roman Catholic faith was rather an advantage than otherwise, inasmuch as it ensured the sanctity of the asylum, while his well-known spirit of toleration gave promise of his being a warm and efficient protector.

The little damsel, thus unceremoniously introduced into Ivy Hall, was of a lively, if not a wayward, temper, and from the habits of a spoiled childhood, as well as from natural inclination, apt to indulge in whatever might happen to be the caprice of the moment. With such a disposition, the general belief of the household in her supernatural qualities delighted her beyond measure, as affording ample scope for the enacting of those wild pranks in which she ever found too much gratification. As to her lute and song, there was indeed a magic in them, but it was the natural magic belonging to matchless skill, and a voice of such extraordinary sweetness as rarely to have been equalled. Her monthly visits to the cromlech were, if

this version might be believed, the result of a previous compact with her father, who, when he had taken the requisite order abroad for her commodious abode there, was to signify his return by depositing a branch of missletoe on the Druid stone.

The circumstance of the black horse plunging into the Severn, in which both steed and riders were lost, might be sufficiently accounted for by supposing that the sudden fury of the storm had startled the animal from his course, and urged him towards the Severn, which was at the time rendered as wild as any sea by a sudden hygre, or eagle, a name given in that part of the country to designate the meeting of the sea-tide with the fresh-water current.

Those, who like this explanation, may adopt it. For my part I stick to my old nurse's legend, and am ready to die upon it that the Pale Lady was either a sylph or a fairy.

MY FIRST YEAR

AT

THE HOSPITAL.

My friend, James Trevethan, was an author, consequently he lived in a garret, fed his wits at home by a process somewhat akin to starvation, and when, by chance, he got an invitation to dine abroad, regaled his body at the expense of his spirit. Unfortunately the latter was the case when I called upon him a few days ago ; he had partaken—poor fellow !—somewhat too freely of the good things at Alderman G——'s table, and the consequence was, when he sat

down to the day's labour, his head was as empty as his own corner cupboard. When I entered the garret, which I did, as usual, without ceremony, I found him with a half-blotted sheet of paper before him, in the very last stage of poetical, or, I should say, prosaical despair, for it was near the end of the month, and it seems he had yet to furnish his quota for the magazine.

"You are busy, Trevethan," said I, making a halt at the door.

"Come in, come in!" said he, testily; "it is only the twenty—th of the month, and not one line have I written, or am I likely to write."

"All the fault of the city dinners," replied I; "he who feeds with aldermen will think like aldermen. Why don't you write an essay on turtle soup; or, the art of dissecting venison to the best advantage?"

"Dissecting!" he exclaimed; "that 's all in your way, Mr. Frederick; I wish it had been my good hap to be, like you, a cutter-up of the dead for the benefit of the living, instead of being cut up myself for the benefit of no oen."

"A thought strikes me, Trevethan!"

"A thought, my good fellow!" exclaimed he; "give it me this instant; and if I don't beat it out, like gold leaf, into an article, my name is not James Trevethan!"

"I'll tell you an adventure of my own."

"Psha! there are no adventures now-a-days worth telling; and yet I don't know—I believe, with your smugglers and poachers, you may now and then do a bit of the romantic in the country."

"Well, but this adventure that I speak of happened in London."

"London!" said Trevethan, contemptuously; "why, this good city of ours is the very antipodes to every thing in the shape of romance."

"Believe me, my good fellow, that's a vulgar error; every time and every place has its own romance, if you have but the talent to see and use it."

"The devil they have!" exclaimed Trevethan; "the doctrine is new, however."

"Not the less true," replied I, quietly. "But you had better hear my tale, and then

judge for yourself; at worst, it will only be half an hour wasted."

"So be it," said Trevethan; "as you say, I know the worst; only make your tale as short as possible, for the *devil* will soon be here, and then what the devil shall I do?"

"Without farther prologue, then," said I — "It is now about twenty years since I left my native town of Southampton, for the purpose of entering myself as a dresser at the Borough hospitals. With the exception of Richard Wyld, a fellow-townsmen, who preceded me with the same views about three years before, I had not a single friend in London, and it will easily be imagined that the pleasure of our first meeting was reciprocal. Wyld immediately took me under his guidance; he procured for me a lodging, introduced me to the surgeons and physicians of the hospital, and, these essential preliminaries having been concluded, he invited a party of fellow-students to meet me at a dinner which he gave at a decent inn in Blackman-street.

"I will not keep you from my story by describing my new acquaintance; the main

point is that we drank freely, and, by way of finishing the evening, agreed to go to the Circus, for such, at that time, was the more humble name of the Surrey Theatre, where we fell into two or three extemporary fights, out of which we got, by some good luck, with flying colours. The worst of it was that the light, and the heat, and the quarrelling, had made us thirsty, if not hungry, and when the curtain fell it was agreed, *nem. con.*, to have a supper at a second-rate sort of tavern adjoining the theatre. Here, after two hours of ale, punch, and porter, it was suggested by my friend Richard that we had had enough, and accordingly, with some difficulty, we again got upon our legs, and set out for home in a body.

“The watchmen, as we staggered along singing and hooting, seemed to be of the Dogberry breed, and prudently took the kennel, into which, otherwise, they saw they would most assuredly have been kicked. Even that class of dogs, who certainly come under the Vagrant Act (for by their late hours they seemed to have no home and no masters), wisely left the way free to us, and there was every hope that

we might all have got safe back to our lodgings but for an unlucky old apple-woman, whose barrow stood by the way-side. To her Richard thought proper to make love, which ended, as love sometimes will do, in a fray between the parties; with one hand Richard seized the paper lantern, with the other he began to pelt an old watchman on the other side of the way, hurling at him a whole shower of apples and oranges; the barrow-woman screamed, the watchman sprang his rattle, rattles answered from all quarters, heads were popped from the various bed-room windows, and, though only a few stragglers were seen a minute before, yet, in an incredibly short space of time, a very decent crowd was collected.

“Finding ourselves thus in a minority, we made a desperate rush, and, though some were captured by the guardians of the night, a few of us contrived to escape. I was of the fortunate party; urged by the fear of—I hardly knew what—I ran on till I was fairly brought to a stop for want of breath, and found myself in a narrow dirty street, unpaved, and faintly lit by two glimmering lamps, that only served

to show the darkness. While I was still leaning against the lamp-post to recover myself, I was suddenly startled by a rough voice saying, "Are you ill, sir?"

"Very," replied I, scarcely looking up; for, what with the punch, and what with the running, my head whirled, and the houses seemed to be reeling round me.

"You had better step into my house close by," said the man, "and rest there for half an hour."

Without waiting for an answer, he took me by the arm, and led me to a low house in about the middle of the street; the door opened with a latch upon a passage and stair-case in a state of filth and dilapidation that, intoxicated as I was, filled me with disgust and horror. Fain would I have retreated, but he pushed me aside, barred and bolted the door, and said roughly, "No, no, my man; you're too drunk to know what's good for you; you shall lie down on my bed awhile, and when the morning comes I will see you safe home, and expect a silver crown for my trouble. Up with you!"

With some difficulty, by his assistance, I

clambered up the creaking stairs, and was shown, or rather shoved, into what he called his bed-room, when, telling me that I did not want a light to go to sleep by, he walked off, and fastened the door behind him. For several minutes I was bewildered ; there was a mingled consciousness of intoxication and of danger, with [a strenuous effort to collect my senses and grapple with the peril. Then came upon me an intolerable thirst, and, in the want of something better, I bethought myself of the oranges which I had taken from the old woman's barrow, and began greedily to suck the juice of them.

While I was thus agreeably employed, I was disturbed by the rattling of chains, and the creaking of a wheel, from the yard below ; curiosity, or it may be the instinct of fear, made me rise and go to the window, when a sight met me that very soon dispelled the fumes of the wine. By the light of the lantern, they carried, I could see my worthy host, and two fellows, even more ill-looking than himself, if that were possible, dragging along a young female about sixteen years of age, to all appearance

lifeless. In a corner of the yard was an open well, with a deep bucket, into which they placed her, and gradually lowered her down into the water. I heard the splash—but my tongue cleaved to my mouth, and I could not breathe a syllable.

“Murder! — foul and horrible murder!” I thought, but I could not speak it.—“And yet, no; there is too much care—too much caution — murder would go to work more roughly.”

Full ten minutes elapsed, when they slowly drew up the bucket, and in it the poor girl, her face yet paler than before, and the green slime of the well upon her arms and dress. And did not the same fate await me? no doubt—no doubt. But how was I to avoid it? to call out for aid—even if any one were near enough to hear me, which I much doubted, would only be to precipitate the fatal conclusion. What was to be done?—what was to be done? Heavens!—I hear a foot upon the stairs—a hand is on the lock!—

At this moment I stood facing the entrance,

totally unable to move or speak, my eyes distended, and every limb strung with terror. The door was slowly opened, and the ruffian and I stood face to face.

“Not asleep yet?” he growled; “why don’t you lie down and sleep off your drunkenness?”

It is surprising how rapidly, in moments of terror, we pass from one state of thought and feeling to another; though my heart still beat, and my tongue trembled, I yet managed to say that I was better, and, while I expressed a wish to return home, offered him my purse in requital for his civility. By freely giving the contents of it, I thought to take away one inducement to murder, and indeed it did seem to stagger the ruffian; he paused for a moment, and then, taking the offered gold, told me, “I was free to go if I thought proper, but I must first take a glass with him and his friends below.” This offer I would willingly have declined, for inexpressible was my longing to get out of the house; but he would take no denial. Putting, therefore, the best face I could on the matter, I followed him, though with the greatest reluctance, into a room below.

Here, at a rough deal table, bearing the stains of old and recent debauchery, sat the two fellows whom I had seen before in the yard, drinking and smoking, till, in the thick, rank cloud from their pipes, every thing around assumed a doubtful and misty appearance. My entrance was hailed sulkily enough by one of these men, but the other, starting from his seat, swore I was "a good fellow, and should share his grog with him."

"Never you mind Old Sulkylooks," he exclaimed with an oath that it is not necessary to repeat; "he can't abide any one should share his liquor; but come, my lad, there's a bumper for you; so drink, and be merry."

Thinking it was best to conciliate the ruffian, I took up the glass, when a loud groan again unnerved me and made me set down the untasted liquid. It seemed to have startled the ruffians too, for all eyes were at once directed to a corner of the room, where now, for the first time, I observed a long table, covered with a dirty sheet; to my straining eyes the linen seemed to move, or was it the

flickering of the smoke?—no—a second groan, and a bare arm started from beneath the cloth.

“She lives, by God!” exclaimed the first ruffian, and rushing to the table he leant with all his weight upon the body. A low gurgling sound followed, and in a few minutes all was over. Now then the truth flashed upon me; these fellows were caterers for the dissecting-room, and, when disappointed in the churchyard, did not scruple to provide the required subjects by murder. No doubt they first drugged their victims to prevent their cries, and then drowned them, as the only mode of death which left no marks of violence to betray them to their employers. In the case of the poor girl, from the short time of her immersion, the deed had not been perfected.

“Well, my lad,” said the first ruffian; “you have seen a little too much of our secrets to leave us in a hurry.”

“No, no, Bill,” said the second; “let him take an oath not to blab what he has seen, and drink one cup to our good health, and then he may go.”

"I will not drink!" exclaimed I; "the cup is drugged with opium."

"You are a devilish clever fellow, my lad," said the first ruffian; "so now you may take your choice; either I shall split your skull with this poker and end the matter at once, or you may drink off that dose of laudanum, and when you're in a sound nap, I'll quietly give you a cold bath which will keep you from waking again."

"You had better take the doctor's stuff," said the second; "and then you'll go off as quietly as a sucking babe, without knowing any thing of the matter."

"Aye, do," said the third—"that's a good fellow; if your crown's once cracked, your body will be of no use to us with the surgeons; they'd ask queer questions."

The respite allowed me by these speeches, brief as it was, enabled me to make up my mind as to the only course which offered a chance of safety. I snatched up a pewter measure from the table, and hurled it at the head of my principal enemy with a force that brought him at once to the ground; almost at

the same instant a left-handed blow felled my second adversary ; the third, an undersized fellow, and weakened by a life of debauchery, was as a child in my hands ; and, before any of the discomfited ruffians could renew the fight, I had escaped into the yard and over the wall into the garden of the next house. This happened to be under repair ; a few loose boards at the entrance of the passage supplied the place of a door, and, bursting through these by no very violent effort, I speedily made my way into the open street. Even here I did not feel myself in safety, but I flew on rapidly through a wilderness of lanes and alleys, till on a sudden, to my great joy, I emerged from this labyrinth by the water-side, not far from London Bridge. The watchman that now met me, and he was the first I had seen for the last quarter of an hour, eyed me, as well he might, with looks of suspicion ; and, when I repeated my tale, he told me it would be " off his beat," or he would lodge me in the watch-house for a " vagrant," as he called it. At this moment the driver of an empty hackney-coach drew up, attracted by the loudness of our dispute,

and, finding nothing better could be done, I flung myself into the unoccupied vehicle, and ordered him to take me to my lodgings.

A continued sleep for many hours restored my body to its usual health and vigour, but the events of the foregone night had lost none of their vividness. Resolving not to act rashly, I went to consult my friend Wyld, when, to my great disappointment, I found that he had been called from London early that morning by the dangerous state of his mother, who indeed was supposed to be dying. Thus left to my own judgment, I determined to remain perfectly passive; and day by day the adventure grew fainter upon my mind, till in the course of a month I had ceased to think of it altogether.

But though I had forgotten the unknown ruffians, it seemed that they had not lost sight of me, nor of the danger that was to be apprehended from my laying the case before a magistrate. One night, on returning from a new acquaintance at the west end of the town, where I had made an early supper, I suddenly came upon the sturdy ruffian, whom I had so

luckily felled in the very crisis of my fate; there could be no mistaking him, though the night was dark, and his face was partially hidden by a rough great-coat drawn about it as a defence against the rain, which now began to fall in torrents. It was evident, too, that he had recognised me, for, in turning round with a hasty glance, I saw him leaning against one of the posts of the curb-stone, and watching my motions. Fortunately, dark and lonely as the street was, there was a passenger on the other side of the way going in the same direction as myself; to him, therefore, I crossed over for greater security, but scarcely had my foot touched the pavement, when a shrill whistle was given, and in the same instant the stranger, as I had fancied him, struck me over the head with a heavy cudgel, and I fell senseless to the ground. The horrors that succeeded this blow would be but feebly described by any language that I could use. I awoke, as it seemed, from a long sleep, in agony unutterable; the bed on which I lay was wet with blood, and around me flitted a multitude of forms, brandishing all manner of strange in-

struments, and each screaming or howling after its own nature; but still there was a language in these sounds, and I could understand that they were threatening me with something,—what I could not tell—but I, too, in the agony of fear, howled, and laughed, and gibbered, as wildly as themselves. Then again, all was dark and silent; it was, I thought, the darkness which should follow the breaking up of the world—the night of annihilation; there was neither sun nor stars, nor heaven, nor life of any kind, but on I roamed through the vastness of space—if that could be called space which was without limit—still onwards, onwards through countless ages, and a voice, which seemed the voice of my own conscience, sounded with the hollow tolling of a funeral bell, and said, “the fool hath said in his heart, there is no God!” — “What! no hope? — not even the sleep of annihilation! Oh for ages of penal fire! but let there be a day, when the soul, purged and purified from the evils of the flesh, may drink at the fount of life and be itself immortal.” But still the same voice continued with its ceaseless drone,

"the fool hath said in his heart, there is no God."

At last a faint light blushed in the distance, like the first tint of day before the sun has risen above the horizon. By degrees it spread and brightened till the whole void was filled with light, that glared with insufferable brilliance, in the midst of which appeared the form of Jehovah, unspeakable, indescribable by any combination of human language. Down, down, I sank to escape from that intolerable brilliance; but in the lowest depth, or in the greatest height, throughout the *Unlimitable*, still was I met by that awful presence.

"Die!" exclaimed a voice, and a cold shadow wrapt me round, pleasant at first as a shelter from those burning beams, but in a little time the intense cold became as horrible to endurance as the fire which it quenched. Its influence was so great as to freeze the invisible air, that by degrees assumed a form and substance, and rocks of ice were rapidly moulded out of the thin ether, upon which I lay as upon a bed of torture, unable to move a single limb, till the very springs of

life were frozen, and I was as the sleeping, or the dead.

A succession of similar scenes followed through many weeks, till at length the delirium passed away, and all at once I recovered my senses as if waking from a deep slumber. By my bed-side sat Wyld, and from him I learnt what you will probably by this time have guessed—that I had been labouring under a violent brain fever, the consequence of the blow given me by the resurrection-man who would have entirely finished me but for the coming up of the watchman, upon whose appearance he and his companion had of course taken to their heels. This led to a repetition of my earlier narrative; but to my mortification, no less than my surprise, Wyld received it with an incredulous smile, and peremptorily broke off the conversation. It was plain he attributed the whole to the invention of my delirium, and was afraid that any farther recurrence to the subject might again unsettle my brain. Even when I had fully recovered, he persisted in the same opinion, and I was obliged to give up the topic, under the penalty

of being thought insane. But though I compelled myself to silence, I could not dismiss the events of that fearful night from my mind; on the contrary, I felt fully assured that the resurrection-men were determined on my death, as the only means of silencing a dangerous witness, who might sooner or later bring them to the gallows. So strong was this impression that though I attended diligently to my studies in the hospital, I took care for some time never to walk the street after sunset. When I went out to supper, which was now a rare occurrence, I invariably took a hackney-coach, and an event, that happened after the lapse of a few weeks, fully justified my caution.

There was a little girl, of about fourteen years of age, who had been brought into the hospital with a fractured leg; it was her lot to fall under the care of one of the worst nurses in the hospital, a woman whose temper, naturally bad, was rendered yet more intolerable by her avarice. If the poor patient could bribe her, well and good; but, if not, every sly annoyance that she dared to inflict was sure to be employed towards the sufferer; and such

was the natural malignity of her disposition that I am quite sure she received as much pleasure from the cries and sufferings of the patients as she did from her favourite gin-bottle. Many a time had I stood between this fiend and the poor girl, and I have little doubt that she would have died under her hands but for my interference. As it was, she recovered, and had left the hospital for some weeks, when one day, as I was crossing the square, who should accost me but my little patient.

“Well, Margaret,” said I; “what brings you here? no more broken limbs, I hope?”

“No, sir,” replied the girl. “I have got a letter for you, but you must promise me not to open it till I am out of sight.”

“A strange condition, child. And who is the writer of this mysterious epistle?”

“You ’ll find her name in the letter, sir, I dare say.”

“Oh, then it comes from yourself; some little favour you want, and are ashamed to ask for in person?”

The girl laughed and nodded — “But do you promise, sir?”

“Oh, certainly,” said I, whereupon Margaret popped the letter into my hand, and was out of sight in an instant. The letter was half a sheet of foolscap, without wax or wafer, and the lines, which went almost diagonally across the page, were in a huge round hand. If, however, the first appearance of this singular epistle made me inclined to laugh, the import of it brought me to a much more serious state of mind. Thus it ran:—

“Respected Sur,

“Pray goe by the first coche to Twittenham ; put up at the Red Lion. A frend will call upon you and tell you something that you ’ll like to here. Pray goe directly,

“Your humble servant,

“Margaret.

P. S. Show this to no won.

2nd. P. S. Pray goe directly.”

The celebrated gunpowder letter did not create more alarm in the court of James than I felt at reading these mysterious hieroglyphics. Of course I connected it with the

resurrection-men. The only question in my mind was, did Margaret mean me fairly, or was she the object to allure me down to Twickenham, in the hope of being able to despatch me? While I was yet meditating upon this knotty point, Wyld crossed the court, and asked laughingly "what huge billet-doux I was studying with so much earnestness." Hereupon I gave him the paper to read, and asked him how he would act in such a matter.

"It's all a hoax, I have no doubt," said Wyld, after having glanced over the paper; "but, for all that, I think it is best you should run down to Twickenham; a night in the country will do you good, and when you find there's nothing in the trash but a joke—no very bright one, by the by—you'll be better satisfied that all your visions about resurrection-men and a drowned girl are the result of your brain fever."

"Will you go with me?" said I, waving any more direct answer.

"With all my heart," he replied; "there's no case of any great consequence in the hos-

pital just now, and the weather is too hot for dissecting."

In half an hour we were seated on the outside of the Twickenham coach, on our way to the Red Lion, who welcomed us as all Red Lions welcome travellers with money in their pockets. To my question whether any one had inquired for Mr. Edwards, the landlord, after having duly forwarded the interrogatory to waiter, bar-maid, and boots, replied in the negative, so that nothing was left to us to fill up the interval till dinner-time but to borrow his fishing tackle and take a trip upon the water. Leaving the choice of our fishing-ground to the boatman, who of course understood the river best, we soon commenced operations, and, had fresh-water fish been worth eating, in less than half an hour we had fairly earned our dinner; by that time I was heartily weary of dragging out roach and dace, when my lagging attention received a fresh fillip from the appearance of a brother angler, whose punt now came up, and was speedily moored within a few yards of our own.

"This is the very man," thought I to myself; "how earnestly he eyes me! Do you know that gentleman?" said I to the boatman.

"No, sir," he replied; "he's a stranger in these parts, come down, like yourself, for a day's pleasure."

"Edwards," said Wyld, "dinner must be ready by this time, and I have had enough of this drowsy work."

And forthwith he began to take his tackle to pieces. The name had evidently roused the stranger's attention; and so impatient did I grow from his silence that I could not help calling out, "Did you speak to me, sir?"

"No!" was the short reply; "never speak to fools."

"Then you never talk to yourself," said Wyld.

To this retort the stranger did not deign to make any reply, and the sourness of his looks was such as to repel all farther communication. We had determined to take our dinner in the common parlour, to make sure of the expected

visitor if he should happen to arrive. During this meal, however, we were left to ourselves, and the few strangers, that dropped in afterwards in the course of the evening, had their own business or their own pleasures to attend to, and certainly had not come to the Red Lion on my account. Still the time passed pleasantly enough. Eleven o'clock crept upon us imperceptibly, amidst Wyld's jokes and quizzings at the non-appearance of my mysterious friend, and finally it was agreed that we would sit up for him no longer. The room into which we were shown had two beds, there being no single-bedded rooms vacant, an arrangement which certainly did not look as if any murder were intended. As a farther precaution, and much to the amusement of Wyld, I drew out and carefully loaded a brace of pocket pistols; these I deposited under my pillow, and leaving the light burning in the chimney, I quietly waited for the attack, which I had no doubt would be made before the night was over. In spite, however, of all my efforts to keep my eyes open, I soon fell fast asleep, nor did I wake till roused by Wyld to

our breakfast in the morning. Taking advantage of the apparent hoax played upon me, he began to rally me most mercilessly, and by the time we had reached London he had well nigh persuaded me that my adventures were, in truth, neither more nor less than the recollection of delirium. On reaching my lodgings, we found that something had happened which went far to shake even his incredulity. My rooms had been broken open, and every article of value robbed from my desk and drawers.

“What an infernal trick!” exclaimed Wyld; “that little wretch was employed to set you off on a false scent to Twickenham, that her confederates might have the better opportunity of plundering you.”

“You are wrong,” said I; “plunder was not the object; look at the torn papers, the cracked mirror, the broken china; this wanton havoc is the work of men who were disappointed in their aim, and have wreaked their vengeance on whatever came into their hands; my life was their object.”

“Psha!” exclaimed Wyld; “had such been their purpose, and the girl had meant to save

you, she would have told you the truth at once, instead of sending you on a fool's errand to Twickenham."

"That by no means follows ; she might wish to save me, and yet not like to compromise her own people, for, that she belongs to them, I feel quite certain."

That we both maintained our opinions will readily be believed ; and though, from the fear of ridicule, I did not lay the matter before a magistrate, yet I did not omit taking every other precaution for my safety. I had double bolts placed upon the doors, bells hung upon the windows, and what, perhaps, was a more efficient guard than all the rest, I purchased a fierce young bull-dog, who was himself a match for any one man.

About two months passed on in this way. My progress in medicine had been rapid ; and such had been my attention to the lectures of the celebrated accoucheur, Thynne, that I was pronounced by him competent to attend the out-patients of a certain Dispensary. About this time, I was rung up one night between eleven and twelve, to attend a poor woman at Bermondsey.

"Get me a coach," said I to the messenger, looking out of the window.

"Lord bless you, sir, there is n't one on any stand far or near; it rains cats and dogs. Pray make haste, sir; my wife's mortal bad, and Mrs. Smith says she does n't expect her to get over it."

There was no resisting a summons of this nature. Hastily dressing myself, and not forgetting my inseparable companions—my pocket-pistols—I hastily sallied forth in the wake of my messenger. The night, though not quite so bad as he described it, was yet bad enough in all conscience, and, excepting in one or two of the leading streets, we had the way entirely to ourselves. Just as we were about to quit the high road for a cluster of narrow alleys, which must have have been passed through to reach the abode of the poor woman, somebody seized my coat from behind. A half-uttered exclamation was on my lips, when I was checked by a small familiar voice:—"Hush!—for God's sake!—it's I—Margaret; if you go on, you are lost!"

"What's the matter now?" said the man,

who being only a few yards in advance of me, had heard my half-stifled exclamation.

"How stupid!" I replied, pretending to feel in my pockets; "by Jove, I have left my instruments behind me."

"Never mind," said the man; "I'll just see you safe into the house—we have n't above ten minutes' walk now—and then I'll run to your lodging and fetch the instruments."

"Thank you, my good fellow; but you will not be able to find them without me."

During this brief dialogue, Margaret had retreated into the shadow of the old wooden porch, from which she had stepped to warn me of my danger. I too was gradually edging off, with my face to the treacherous messenger, who seemed puzzled how to act.

"You won't leave the poor creature in these straits?" said he, advancing upon me.

But I had no mind that the distance between us should be lessened, and, presenting one of my pistols, plainly told him that if he came forward another step I would blow his brains out.

"Well," said he; "I suppose I may go back with you for the instruments?"

"Yes," replied I, my intention being to give him in charge the moment I could meet a watchman. Probably the fellow guessed my purpose, for he turned upon his heel and walked off, muttering that he must "go and look for another doctor."

Free thus, for a moment, from danger, I determined to unravel the mystery, if possible, and for that purpose would have compelled Margaret to a confession; but she had gone, while my back was turned towards the porch; in my dispute with the ruffian she must have stolen off,—whether unseen by him or not was another question. I almost feared not, though the houses flung a deep shadow on that side of the way, and she had the advantage of a dark dress, which, of course, rendered her less open to observation. You will see how far I was right, for my story is rapidly drawing to a conclusion.

At this time the lectures of John Abernethy were so popular that the students from other hospitals were in the habit of attending them. By the advice of Wyld, I was amongst the number, and, in consequence, had made the

acquaintance of some of the young surgeons of Saint Bartholomew's. This, of course, and the community of our pursuits, led occasionally to my visiting their dissecting-room, and more particularly as one of my new acquaintances, of the name of Allen, took a pride in his anatomical preparations. He had just completed the laborious anatomy of a head, and, in the pride of his heart, had invited me to the dissecting-room. But what were my horror and surprise, when, the first thing that greeted my sight was the dead body of poor Margaret, lying on the table! there was no mistaking the features, so little were they changed by death.

"In the name of heaven!" I exclaimed, "where did you get this body?"

"From the resurrection-man, to be sure;" replied Allen, not a little surprised at my vehemence; "is it any one you know?"

"His name! his name!" I cried, scarcely sensible of the question.

"I hardly know what to say to that," replied Allen; "you seem to take a great deal of interest in the girl, and it might be the means of getting the poor fellow into a scrape."

“Don’t attempt to trifle with me, Allen; let me know the name this moment, or by heavens, I’ll have you before a magistrate. It is market-day in Smithfield, and you well know, that in five minutes I can bring a mob about your ears which will show you as little mercy as the murderous scoundrel has shown to this poor girl.”

The fear of coming into contact with an infuriated mob, and the accusation of murder so decidedly brought against the resurrection-man, overcame the scruples of Allen. The fellow’s name was Willis; where he actually lived the young surgeon could not say, but he was generally to be found at a low public-house in the neighbourhood of Tooley-street. Thither we went, accompanied by a body of students, and, assisted by the constable, at once took the wretch into custody.

John Willis was tried, and condemned for murder, in spite of his solemn asseveration of innocence. On the very last night of his being on this earth, and not till then, was he brought to own the justice of his sentence, for this, as well as many previous murders; but to unroll

a book so bloody would be neither pleasant nor useful. Suffice it to say that the poor girl was his own niece, whom he had made away with, on the mere suspicion of her having warned me against their plots. As it never entered into his head to commit unprofitable murder, he had sold the body, according to his usual custom, and the consequence was that, at last, he himself was laid upon the very same dissecting-table that he had so often supplied with subjects.

A LEGEND

OF

KNOLE, OR KNOWLE PARK,

KNOLE, or **Knowle Park**, near **Sevenoaks**, in **Kent**, the seat of the **Earl of Plymouth**, is remarkable, not only from its extent, but from having been the residence of many celebrated characters. Amongst the principal names that ornament the recollections belonging to it is that of **Lord Sackville**, the noble author of the *Induction to the Mirror of magistrates*, a poem pronounced by **Warton** almost equal to **Spenser's Fairy Queen**. Had he said superior, he would have done no wrong to his critical saga-

city. Several archbishops too succeeded to the proprietorship of Knole Park; and, indeed, the building might, from its extent, be a worthy habitation for a prince, for it occupies nearly five acres of ground, the principal portions forming a spacious quadrangle, with smaller ones behind.

The genealogy of the Earls of Plymouth may be traced back to a very remote period.

The family name is Windsor, and the descent is derived from Walter Fitz-Otho, who, in the time of William the Conqueror, was castellan of Windsor Castle. This celebrated feudal chief was the common ancestor of the Kentish Windsors, of the Carews of Cornwall, and of the Fitzgeralds of Ireland, all names more or less illustrious in history. During the civil war, Thomas Windsor adhered with unflinching loyalty to the cause of Charles, and accordingly, at the Restoration, for his good services he was declared Baron Windsor, and in 1682 received a yet farther mark of royal favour by being advanced to the dignity of Earl of Plymouth.

It is told of one of the earlier lords of this race, that, like many other great men of the period, he was a student of the Black Art, and particularly noticed for his devotion to the science of Palingenesey. According to this doctrine, which occupied the attention not only of private individuals, but of learned societies both in England and France, there are three essential and distinct parts in man—the gross body, consisting of earth and water, which at death returns to the earth again; the sensitive and corporeal soul, or astral spirit, consisting of fire and air, that in death wandereth in the air or near the body; and the immortal and incorporeal soul, which immediately returns to God who gave it. The next object of the Palingenesians was to apply their doctrine to the explanation of the popular belief in ghosts. As it was incontestibly proved that the substantial form of each body, whether of man or vegetable, resided in a sort of volatile salt, it was perfectly evident in what manner superstitious notions must have arisen about ghosts haunting church-yards. When a dead body had been committed to the earth, the salts

of it, during the heating process of fermentation, were exhaled; the saline particles then resumed, each, the same relative situation they had held in the living body, and thus a complete human form was induced, calculated to excite fear even in the minds of the Palingenesians.

The sun of a bright summer evening was fast setting, when a stranger from the East, as it appeared by his dress, loudly rang the bell at Knole Castle.

“Benedicite!” said the porter, muttering to himself, “we have a visitor at last, and are like to hear other voices beside our own. Marry, but it will be ill tidings to the spiders in the hall, and the owls upon the tower, who have well nigh had the castle to themselves for the last three years. Books!—books!—I wonder what pleasure his lordship finds in poring over dusty folios, when he might take his pastime on the river and in the forest, and none to say him nay. Cags-nouns!—Heaven forgive me for swearing!—but it’s enough to set a reasonable man beside himself to be cooped up in these old walls with neither wine nor wassail,

just for all the world as if the plague were in the house and a line of health were drawn around us, or as if we were besieged—no, by my faith, I'm wrong there; a siege would be a merry matter compared to our dull doings; we should at least hear other voices beside our own, and see other faces; to be sure, we might lose a leg or so, or mayhap a head might be knocked off, but what then? as well be without a head as trouble the shoulders to carry it when there's nothing to pleasure either its eyes or its ears."

Hère the old porter's lengthened soliloquy was interrupted by a second ring of the bell, that, by its increased vehemence, showed the patience of the visitor was exhausted.

"Aha!" said the old porter, with a grim smile; "thou art in haste, it should seem—a sign that you know very little of what's going on within our walls. And who the devil have we here?" he continued, as he opened the gate, and saw the form of an old Arab.

"Haly Ben Tamar," responded the stranger.
"Say so much to your master, and rest assured

o.

he will yield the welcome that seems denied to me by his churlish porter."

"Like enough, like enough," replied the angry janitor; "you are just one of those cattle that have so helped to turn his brain but, till he has given his orders, there you may stay, and see what you can make of the stars; though I cry you mercy—the sun has not yet gone to bed, and the stars won't be up for these two hours. Stay you there, notwithstanding; the fresh air may cool your hot brain, and give you an appetite for your supper, if the said meal shall chance to be forthcoming."

The Arab, whose face by time and heat seemed to have been withered up to the complexion of a mummy, bore this repulse without the slightest appearance of anger or emotion of any kind. Seating himself on a stone, and leaning quietly upon his staff, he was soon lost in his own meditations, which were long enough to travel to Araby and back again, for the porter by no means hurried himself in his mission. When he did return, his ill humour was far from being bettered, by an order from his master to conduct the Arab into his presence.

"I told thee so," said the stranger, slowly rising at his summons; "I told thee that Haly Ben Tamar would be a welcome visitor to the lord of Knole Park."

"Humph!" muttered the porter. "The devil, they say, sometimes speaks truth, and so may his scholars, for aught I know to the contrary. But please you to move a little faster, for the Baron's in a mighty hurry to see you—more's the pity."

And forthwith he strided on, at a pace that soon brought them into a long room, lined with books, and lit up by Gothic windows, where Sir William sat at the table, in the midst of a heap of vials, retorts, astrolabes, and other strange implements, then deemed requisite to his pursuits.

"Welcome!" he exclaimed, rising as soon as the sage entered. "Trust me, the message that announced your coming was more grateful to me than would have been the tidings of a Spanish carrack. Welcome, my old master in the divine arts of Chaldæa; thou hast kept time and touch with me, and I thank thee heartily."

“Well said, my son,” replied the sage; “it is so, and no otherwise, that the grateful scholar should address his master. Kings may give honour, fortune may bestow gold—but neither kings nor fortune can teach philosophy.”

“A glorious truth,” said the Baron; “though the fools of this world have seldom the eyes to see it.”

“And how hast thou profited in mine absence?” said the sage. “Well, I should believe, for I see thee well employed; thou hast a keen spirit, without which industry itself avails nothing, save to the merest drudge who toils in the common ways of the world.”

“I fear me, Haly, you over-rate my powers, though you do no more than justice to my zeal. It is now more than seven years since you first inducted me into the noble paths of science, and yet how little have I advanced towards the grand secret! I have learnt but as you taught, nor have I added one single grain to the stores of the philosopher.”

“Patience, my son, patience!” replied the Arab; “good will is seldom without good fruit, nor shall it be now; the stores of my know-

ledge shall be freely unlocked to you ; and, by the blessing of Allah, my seven years of travel have not been in vain. If I have conversed with the learned Brahmins of the East, and held a long communion with the sages of Chaldæa, it has been not only to impart but to gain wisdom."

"I can well believe it, worthy Haly," said the Baron. "And this new doctrine of Paligenesey ?—heard you aught of it in your travels?"

"Yes ; but it is a matter of simple import."

"Simple as it may be, I cannot read it. Thus much, and thus much only, do I know ;—that the astral spirit, either of man or of plant, may be produced by submitting the powdered leaves of the one, and the bones of the other, to a gentle heat ; but though I can extract this salt, I can by no effort of art discover the creative essence which is requisite to give it life."

"Had you found that, you had gone beyond myself, and the Magi of the East, for in that essence lies the grand secret—the *elixir vitæ*. But be of good cheer ; even to that, by the blessing of Allah, may we attain."

"It is hardly in my hopes," said the Baron. "Ha, fellow!" he exclaimed, his eye now for the first time falling upon the lingering porter; "would'st eaves-drop thy master's conversation with his guests? begone, sirrah!"

"I did but wait," stammered the porter, "to take ——"

"Take thyself off!" cried the Baron, angrily; "and know, for the future, I'll have no spies about my person."

The baffled porter withdrew without another word; and, from this evening, every hour for weeks was spent by the Baron and his guest in the earnest pursuit of necromancy and its sister arts. The full of the second moon seemed to have brought their studies to a desired end. The mysterious liquid which had boiled and bubbled over the lamp for so many weeks had passed through a variety of changes, till it assumed the colour of the pure blue sky, and sent forth an odour which, though not ungrateful to the senses, was so pungent as to produce a thrilling sensation which almost bordered on pain.

"The work is well nigh accomplished,"

said the sage. "Hark! I hear the first low sounds that harbinger life, and health, and joy—the glass begins to ring—yes, it rings with the fierce struggles of the elemental spirit bursting from its body—aye, even as the soul struggles, when parting from its earthly tenement. Hark, my friend—hark, my son! how it rings! how it rings!—wild, yet soft and sweet, as the music of the spheres, as they wheel on in their nightly round, unheard by all save the angels above, and the blessed few below, to whom wisdom, and virtue, and patience, have unlocked their ears. Oh, this is a moment of joy unutterable!—but watch—I pray thee watch—let but a moment pass, when the work is perfected, and the globe will be shivered into impalpable dust, and the precious element mingle with the kindred fire which slumbers in the air."

The eyes of both were fixed anxiously and steadily upon the globe; nothing was heard in the room but the low bubbling sound of the spirit, that with every minute grew thinner and thinner, till at last it seemed little more substantial than the impalpable blue air.

"Now!" cried the sage, and the Baron immediately threw down the lamp, leaving the room with no other light than the pale blue glow that flowed coldly but steadily from the liquid in the globe. The sage, for the first time, showed himself sensible of human feelings. In an ecstasy of joy, he exclaimed, "Embrace me, my son! It is done!—it is done!—in that precious liquid have we found the magisterium, the grand secret, the elixir vitæ, the mystery of creation, the soul of the elements—the blessed draught which converts lead into gold, age into youth, vice into virtue, deformity into beauty, a perishable life into an imperishable model of the angels—yet again embrace me."

"Father," exclaimed the Baron, recoiling from his grasp, "thy touch has the iciness of death."

"Quick!—quick!" exclaimed the old man, "quick, or I die—Oh, God! I die!"

And the Arab fell a lifeless corse at the Baron's feet, before his lips could touch the proffered goblet. The glass, dropping from his death-struck hand, fell upon a heap of

mould which had been brought from a neighbouring churchyard, as a material for some of their mystic operations.

For the first few moments a bitter feeling of disappointment swallowed up all other feelings in the breast of the Baron.

“And is this the promised end?” he cried—“the precious liquid lost! the sage himself dead, and in his grave buried the knowledge of many ages! Death has hidden it beneath a mountain. Where, where is the hand that can dig up from the earth this treasure, more precious than its gold or diamonds? not mine—not mine. Haly! my friend! my master! my more than father!—great and virtuous soul, thou hast gone to heaven. Elijah has ascended, and there is none to catch up the falling mantle of the prophet.”

The Baron's heart softened at the recollection of the old man's virtues, his unceasing friendship for himself, and those high qualities by which two kindred souls had been held in long and firm communion. That such a man should have died, and in the moment, that should have crowned the toil of many years,

seemed to him an evil far beyond the loss of wealth and immortality to himself; it was a wrong done to all that elevates and ennobles human nature; it seemed to show that virtue brought no happiness, wisdom no immunities, the most patient labour no advantage. Had he not sacrificed all the ease and pleasures of life, anticipating old age, for this sole object—and was it not dashed from his lips even in the moment of promised enjoyment? These, and a thousand similar thoughts, rushed through his bewildered brain, clashing with each other, like the mingling of wind and current, till from the very weariness of thought a sort of mental apathy came over him. He looked upon the dead body, and was himself astonished to find that he felt no longer; his mind gradually became a mere blank, a sort of dead sea, in which nothing moved or lived.

Hours must have passed in this way, for the moon had risen and was high in the heavens, when he was suddenly startled from his torpor by a loud groan. Did the Arab yet live? Alas, no! the muscles of the face re-

mained rigidly fixed, the chin dropped, and the eyes returned his startled glance with the cold, fixed gaze of death.

“Imagination plays strange tricks with us,” murmured the Baron. “But no!—it is not fancy—again!—again!” and his own voice rose in depth and sharpness to the pitch of the strange groans in unconscious sympathy. But what was the increase of his horror, when, on looking round, he saw arising from the mould, the shadow of a man who had fallen by his own hand in the civil war, and had been buried in the neighbouring churchyard! At once he saw the fearful mysteries of Palingenesey realized in this apparition; the elixir had fallen on the mould from the dead man’s grave, and hence it had flung up, like a film, the astral spirit. The more he gazed, the greater was his horror, till at length he could bear the sight no longer.

How the night was passed the Baron scarcely knew himself, but the morning came, and with it brought a calm slumber of many hours, from which he woke with only a mournful recollection of what had

happened. There was indeed an alteration in the inward man, but it was not one of a kind most obvious to the grosser understanding of those about him. If he wandered to the park, without the pretext even of a gun or a fishing-rod, it was no more than his usual habit, and therefore it excited neither surprise nor comment; but when the night came, and the Baron had not returned to his usual early and frugal meal, the household became alarmed; the servants were despatched to seek him in every direction, and at last he was found, pale and lifeless, at the foot of an old oak, with his favourite stag-hound watching over him, the usual companion of his solitary rambles. At first they concluded him dead, but the application of cold water from the near spring was sufficient to recover him. He slowly opened his eyes, and, as sense gradually returned to him, their glance wandered from one to the other, as if in search of something. But the object, whatever it might be, was absent; this was evidently a relief to him, for, heaving a heavy sigh, he exclaimed, "Thank God! he's gone again!"

“Who, my lord?” inquired the domestics.

But this question thoroughly restored the Baron to his consciousness, and, without deigning any reply to the anxious curiosity of those around, he shook off the arm that was proffered to him, and, suppressing all his feelings by a violent effort, strode slowly back to the castle.

As before, the morning brought with it slumber, and the evening, quiet; but as the shades began to fall, his cheek paled, and his eye became troubled; the astral spirit which he had raised had appeared to him, the night before, at precisely the same hour as at its first apparition, and the very heart within him grew sick and faint at the idea of its still haunting him. The castle-walls were no protection; the free air of heaven, with the light of the moon and the blessed stars, afforded no exemption from its visits; might there not be a sanctuary in the church?—and no sooner had the thought entered his mind than he hastened to put it into execution. With no other companion than his faithful dog, he took his refuge at the high altar, determined to await there the passing of

the evil hour. There was nothing, however, very healing to a fevered mind in the solitude of a church, with the dead sleeping below, and the pale marbles frowning from the walls above. Thus seen, it is not the same place that we have visited, with the cheerful crowds of life about us, with the organ pealing forth its anthems, the priest praying, or many hundreds of voices joining in the same song of joy and thankfulness to Heaven. How dimly the light creeps through the stained windows! what an unearthly reek has the cold damp air! what a strange feeling comes over the mind, as if we were severed from the world and making a near acquaintance with the grave! have we not unholy intruded upon the sanctuary of the dead? broken in upon their slumbers, like a thief stealing at night into the chamber of sleep, to rob and pillage? How strange, and yet how familiar seem the font, the brazen images stretched upon the pavement, the empty pews, the pulpit, and the written scrolls upon the walls!

To the impatient and fevered mind of the Baron the minutes lengthened into hours, till he almost might be said to expect, rather than

fear, the moment for the vision's coming. With weary eye and throbbing heart, he saw the darkness settle down upon one portion of the church, while the other half was lit up by the light of the rising moon. At length the clock from the belfry struck twelve. Either his eyes dazzled, or the sound, as it vibrated through the aisles, startled the pale images into a motion like that of life; each succeeding stroke of the bell was louder than that before, and struck so painfully upon the ear that he feared the coming of the next, as a something that was to crush soul and body—Louder, louder, louder, till at last he waited for the twelfth stroke of the bell, as for the coming of a thunderbolt. But minute after minute of horrid expectation passed, and still it sounded not. Had he mistaken the hour?—it might be so, for his excited state of mind was not the best calculated to take an accurate note of outward things, whether they appealed to the sight or the hearing. But no! it was the hour, for there again stood the accursed vision, making the night horrible; and again the Baron found a refuge from his terrors in temporary unconsciousness.

Night after night passed on in this manner, nor did the Baron find that any change of place produced even a temporary absence of his unwelcome visitant; go where he would, it followed him like the "*atra cura*,"—the black Care of the Roman poet; and no sooner did the clock strike twelve than, punctual to the hour, there appeared the Astral Spirit he had so unwittingly helped to evoke, by causing the removal of the mould from the churchyard. On land, or on the sea, it was all the same thing. Neither prayer nor exorcism were able to ban the phantom; till at length the Baron, worn out by the continuance of these nocturnal visits, sank into a premature grave—another proof and example that "the tree of knowledge is not that of life."

A LEGEND
OF
BURLEIGH-ON-THE-HILL.

THE civil war had not yet broken out, but though the storm was still to burst, the tokens of it were sufficiently evident to the most indifferent spectator. The too-much-abused and opposite phrases of "liberty" and "loyalty" were familiar in the mouths of men ; the old friendships of youth were broken up and succeeded by the new alliances of kindred politics and religion. The two parties indeed had not as yet learned to distinguish each other by the

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appellation of Cavaliers and Roundheads, but though the name was wanting, the thing itself existed. The line of demarcation was strongly marked out, and the growing spirit of fanaticism would as soon have associated with the arch-fiend himself as with the friends of royalty and prelacy.

The poet hath observed that "the course of true love never doth run smooth," and we suppose it was in compliance with this notable rule of contradiction that Lucy Edgehill, the daughter of a violent fanatic, fell in love with Henry Rainsford, who, by virtue of his office, as page to Charles, was loyal in the very opposite extreme. Great as was the distance of Catmole from London in those days of tedious travel, the distance thus set between them by circumstance was yet greater. But, it seems that wilful lady, Fortune, had taken the affair into her own hands, and, at the moment when such an event might be least expected, who should suddenly appear to Lucy in her lonely walk, but the very loyal and loving page!

"In the name of Heaven!" exclaimed the astonished Lucy, "what brings you here at

such a time? why have you left the Court?"

"The Court has——but kiss me first—nay, not one kiss after so long an absence?—one would think that the news of my ill-fortune had travelled faster than myself; and yet that can hardly be," he continued, patting his breathless horse; "my friend Roanoak flies like the wind, and I promise you I have spared neither whip nor spur."

"I understand you not, Henry;—what has happened?—what can have happened?"

"Nothing very unusual, I fancy; I have only been discarded by the king, for a trifling affair of honour with a brother page; and so your father can object to me no longer. I am ready to mount the steeple hat and clip the lovelock as soon as he pleases."

"Alas, Henry! you little know my father; it is not a mere outward change will satisfy him."

"What, then, will satisfy him?" asked the page, impatiently.

"He will expect you to think with him—perhaps to act with him."

"Oh, you mean that I should visit the con-

venticle, snuffle prayers an hour long through my nose, abjure the playhouse—the dear, delightful playhouse!—forswear silk and satin, and—you shake your head—why, an these be not the virtues of a real fanatic, I should like to know what are.”

“I will tell thee, young man,” said a tall stately figure, suddenly emerging from the clump of oaks beside them, where he had evidently been a listener; “I will tell thee, young man—sobriety of thought and speech; a love of God and of your country—of that God whose altars are desecrated by the abominations of prelates, and of that country which groans under the heavy hand of the tyrant, and which, like an afflicted mother, crieth out to all her children for help in a voice that cannot be mistaken.”

There is something in genuine feeling, however absurd it may be, that seldom fails to have its effect upon the ear. Wonderful to say, the light-hearted page received this solemn announcement without a smile, and even bent an attentive ear to the earnest and solemn language of the fanatic, as he dilated upon what

he was pleased to call the crimes of the Court, and the sufferings of the country. So absorbed and perfect was his attention that the old man deceived himself with the idea of having made a convert, and it was in a tone of unusual kindness that he wound up his harangue by saying—"But enough of this for the present:—I would have thee do nothing rashly—nothing upon the mere excitement of the moment. We approach not the holy sacrament without due and solemn preparation, nor is it fitting that we should devote ourselves to a service second only to that, till our spirit is chastened by deliberation, and fully sensible of its sacredness.

"Go then, my sòn, for by that name it pleases me to call you, since you have left the Court of Belial. Go; ponder well upon my words; seven days do I give thee for deliberation, a short space to put off thy old garments, and put on thy new armour wherein to fight the battle of righteousness; but, short as the space may be, the times allow no longer limit, for the heady current rushes on, and even while we cry "behold!" it has passed us, and borne with it

the bark that should have been our salvation. Use then the hour of grace well and wisely; for seven days be as one who stands in the presence of the Lord, praying for that grace which is never denied to the contrite sinner. Let the week be to thee as one sabbath; cross not the path of my daughter, nor defile thy better spirit with any thought of the flesh. These things being done truly, as I have said unto thee, meet me on the seventh, in the same spot and at the same hour, when if the good seed shall have ripened into good fruit, and thou shalt be willing to cast thy lot amongst us, I will be to thee as a father, and my Lucy shall be thy wife."

The page was about to make a reply, but Lucy, by a quick and expressive gesture, unseen by the old man, motioned him to be silent, whereupon the youth, repressing his feelings, bowed profoundly, and departed. A transient gleam of satisfaction lighted up the stern features of the fanatic as he exclaimed—"The wholesome medicine is bitter at first, but it works—it works; he is as yet in the bonds of sin, and the gall of unrighteousness,

but I have good hope that those bonds shall be broken, and that the gall shall be turned into honey, pleasant to the eye, and gracious to the palate."

Never was missionary more mistaken in his convert than was the worthy Amos Edgehill, whose fanaticism was strongly at variance with the natural kindness of his disposition. The lively page was impatient of a creed that would at once have turned his young summer into winter, while the old man's political tenets were a subject of yet deeper detestation. That some plot subversive of Charles's authority was in agitation was sufficiently plain, from the old man's words, however guarded, and this was enough at once to stir up the sleeping spirit of loyalty in the page's breast, and make him forget that he was discarded. Still his love for Lucy made him do perhaps more than justice to her father, and, by a singular contradiction, he contrived to think of the man apart from his doctrines.

"Never," said he to himself, "was poor page in such a dilemma—and what is worse, I have two points to carry, each of which is

a mountain in itself, and incompatible with the other. I must be reinstated at Court—that 's beyond all question ; I must have Lucy for my bride—that 's no less certain. But how the deuce am I to gain either my wife or my place? Thinking does not help the matter, so I 'll e'en try what my dreams may do for me ; and that I may dream to the purpose, I 'll eat as good a supper as mine host of the Royal Crown can furnish."

Fairly ensconced at the Royal Crown, the page followed his own recipe with a punctuality that was truly admirable. Fish, flesh, and fowl fell away before him, much as the seven mountains of bread disappeared beneath the jaws of Grugeon in the fairy tale ; and, as so much good eating of course required a proportionable quantity of liquid, he could do no less than drink till the chairs and candles began to grow double around him. But whether the recipe was bad in itself, or that he had taken the medicine in too large a dose, certain it is that he slept like a top, and woke at a late hour in the morning from a dreamless slumber. Fortune, however, had again taken the ball upon

her own racquet, and struck it with a force that promised to win the game in defiance of all calculation. Scarcely had he dressed himself when the host appeared with a face full of bustle.

“Have you heard the news, my young master?—but I cry your worship pardon, you have been fast in the land of Nod, while the duke and his people passed on their way to Burleigh-on-the-Hill.”

“What! the Duke of Buckingham?”

“Who but he; your worship! And he has brought Ben Jonson with him to get up an entertainment for the king, who is looked for, in the course of a day or two.”

“The king! Ben Jonson!” echoed the page. “*Via*, goodman Dull; my sword! my cap!”

“Your worship forgets your breakfast,” said the host,—“the delicate fat capon, and as prime a sirloin as ever man stuck his knife into.”

“A fico for your capons! to the devil with your sirloin!” cried the impatient page.

“Treason!” exclaimed the host, half in jest, and half in anger, at the loss of his expected

symbolum; "he damns the noble knight Sir-lain, who had his honour from the hand of majesty itself."

But the page was in no humour either for quirk or quibble, and, pushing the host aside, he fairly took the stairs at a single bound, and hastily made his way to the stable. To saddle and mount his horse, was the work of a few minutes only; and in less than half an hour he stood upon the top of Burleigh Hill, the sides of the noble animal heaving with the violence of his course, his blood-red nostrils opening to the wind, and the foam flying in showers from the champed bit. It was only now he began to think that the visit of a discarded page at Burleigh-on-the-Hill was in the very last degree of impudence, and not unlikely to draw down unpleasant consequences upon the perpetrator. But the spirit of youth, more especially if that youth happened to be a page, is not so easily subdued by the doubts of prudence. With as much easy assurance as if he had been a bidden and welcome guest, he gave his horse to one of the grooms, and made his way into the hall where Ben Jonson was superintending the scenic preparations for

his celebrated entertainment, the "Masque of Gipsies." To his great surprise, the poet received him with a gracious welcome.

"What! Master Rainsford! has the fame of my new masque brought thee so far from the vanities of London?"

"I were but a Bæotian," said the page, "if the worst of your poems could not have drawn me some miles farther. The trees and stones, they say, danced at the song of Orpheus, and I would not have you think me duller than wood or marble."

"I think no such thing," said the poet, eagerly; "art thou not one of my own sons, sworn and christened at the Mermaid?—But how is it that I see you here? I heard you were in disgrace with our royal master."

"Was, would be nothing," replied the page; "I am."

"And *will* be," cried the poet, hastily, "if you use not more sobriety in your doings. Know you not that the anger of kings is to be dreaded as the roaring of the lion?"

"That is the reason I have come hither."

"Why, Charles is looked for every hour."

"So they told me."

"Zounds, boy! and would you, a discarded page, venture to thrust yourself under the very nose of royalty? Surely you have forgotten that there is such a place as the porter's lodge, where a fine jacket may be stripped, and a fair skin whipped, to the great grief and discredit of the owner of them."

"Truly," said the page, "such things might be, if I had a mind to await the operation. But such is not my purpose; I have come to ask your intercession with the king at a moment when he can refuse you nothing."

"How so, boy? how is the present moment more favourable than any other?"

"Only thus," said the page; "our royal master is an able judge and a passionate lover of true poetry; he prizes the sparkle of a bright thought beyond the lustre of emerald or diamond; delighted, as he is sure to be, with the 'Masque of Gipsies,' he will deny you nothing."

Few men have had more shrewdness or more judgment to guide their wit and learning than

Ben Jonson; but he was a poet and an actor, two occupations which of all others are most likely to foster the weeds of vanity; moreover, he was really attached to the youth; and after a brief discussion it was agreed that Ben Jonson should undertake the page's cause with his royal master—"always supposing," added Ben, "that my new masque should be fortunate enough to take the king's fancy."

"Then is my pardon certain!" exclaimed the page, in a tone of enthusiasm, partly real and partly affected.

"Go to," said the poet, smiling; "you're a foolish, and, I fear me, a wilful lad; but with all your wilfulness, you are too good to be cast away like a weed into the oven. Away with you, though; should Buckingham find you here, a scene might happen, and then we should have him for an enemy with the king—*I, puer, plantâ celeri pererrâ*—which, page as you are, I suppose I need hardly translate for your better understanding."

It is probable that the old bard did more than justice to the page's Latinity, but this was of the less consequence, as it required no great

scholar to see that, having carried his point the sooner he left the duke's mansion the better. For once, the necessity of the case compelled him to prudence, and, with a quickness by no means usual to him, he remounted his horse, and betook himself to his hostel. Here we must leave him for a while.

It was a glorious sight when Charles and his brilliant court were assembled to witness a master-work of one of the master-spirits of an age that has had no equal. The company too was worthy of the author; it was composed of the fairest and noblest of the land, their appearance heightened by a brilliance of dress and decoration to which the best appointments of the modern stage are but as the tawdry tinsel of a fair. Such an audience! such a poet! and such actors!—when shall we see their like again? and assembled in princely halls like that of Burleigh-on-the-Hill!

The masque had been followed in its progress by the increasing satisfaction of the spectators, and when the divided curtains fell again together, a general murmur of delight ran round the hall. The eyes of the poet, who had stood

behind Charles's chair, glistened, and his rough features softened for a moment into the tenderness of dignity.

"Rare Ben Jonson!" exclaimed the king, in an involuntary burst of admiration.

The words ran round the audience in an instant, for when were the words of royal hate, or favour, without an echo? The Queen, Henrietta, called the poet forward, and, with all the grace of her nation, taking from her hair the coronet of flowers wreathed with gems, she placed it upon the head of the kneeling poet. With some hesitation, proceeding from her imperfect knowledge of the English language, she tried to imitate the words and accent of Charles—"Rare—Ben Jonson!"

A tear glistened in the eye of the rough old poet, and he, too, stammered as he replied—"May your poor servant have no other epitaph than the words of your gracious Majesty. If my will have any worth with those that follow me, they, and they only, shall be engraven on my tombstone,—'RARE BEN JONSON.'"

"We will not anticipate the falling of so bright a star," said the king with a composed

smile. "Let us rather enjoy the present."

"I do! I do!" interrupted the poet eagerly; "what greater enjoyment can I have than the approbation of my great, my good, my noble master?"

"If all were like thee, my true and faithful servant!" said the king, and a momentary gloom came across his brow. It seemed, however, that by some strong effort of the will he suppressed the rising thought, for he went on in a gayer tone—"You have given me a pleasant hour, a rare event in the life of kings; and it is only fitting that I should try to do as much for you; but, though I have the will, I want the knowledge; you must direct me how I shall best recompense your labour."

"To be silent when your Majesty commands that I should speak, would be unmannerly pride in a faithful servant. Since it is your royal will that I should ask, I must needs beg your gracious pardon for Henry Rainsford, who, in the mere wilfulness of youth, has for a moment failed in his duty.

"Rise!" said the king, in a quick sharp tone, that startled all around him.

This sudden change restored the old poet to a sense of his own dignity. He rose up and stood before the king, meeting his keen searching gaze with a look of grave wonder, and it might also be that something of reproach was mingled with the expression of his other feelings. The wrath of Charles, from whatever cause it had risen, gradually subsided before the calm bearing of his subject.

"Follow me," he said at length, and led the way to a near cabinet, amidst the wondering gaze and deep silence of the brilliant assembly, none of whom could understand why the king should be so deeply moved by so common an event as a duel between two young pages.

No sooner were they in the cabinet than Charles signed to the poet to make fast the door. Ben obeyed the order as silently as it was given, and again placed himself before the king, as if waiting for an explanation.

"What know you of this youth?" said the king after a long pause, in which he had seemed to be gathering the poet's meaning from his looks.

"He is one of my adopted sons," replied Ben Jonson.

"Your adopted son!" echoed the monarch.

"Yes, Sire; it may not be known to your Majesty, but we poets of the better file are in the habit of adopting and cherishing by our counsel and example such youths as give the promise of one day ripening into talent."

"Then he is a poet?" said the King.

"I said not so, your Majesty; *non cuius contingit adire Corinthum*; it is not given to every one to become a poet."

"I can well believe you, Master Jonson, for it is seldom that a poet is a traitor."

"Henry Rainsford a traitor!" exclaimed Ben, in amazement. "Your Majesty has not a more loyal, or, for his years, a more zealous servant."

"And yet this zealous servant colleagues with traitors. Know you not that he is a frequent visitor in the house of that obstinate and rebellious fanatic, Amos Edgehill?"

"I have heard of the man, and that he has a fair daughter; it is to her, most

likely, that the youth's visits are directed."

"To love the child of such a man," said the king, austerely, "if not treason, is at least the ready road to it."

"To many there might be danger, but not to Henry Rainsford. Loyalty with him is the affection of a child to his father; and if a fair bride were only to be purchased by treason, right sure am I that Henry would remain to the end of his days an unwedded bachelor."

"Will this convince you?" said the king, taking a paper from his pocket and placing it in the hands of the poet.

There was a slight degree of hesitation in the old man's manner as he received and unfolded the accusing document. Charles fixed a searching gaze upon him as he read, and thought he saw the page's condemnation in the change of his hard features, which grew yet harder, while his huge shaggy brows contracted like a penthouse over his eyes.

"Are you satisfied?" asked the monarch.

"Perfectly, Sire."

"You give up his cause then?"

“Quite the contrary.”

The king in his turn looked dark and moody.

“I ask not your Majesty who wrote this paper; such a freedom would ill become the duty of a subject. It is enough for me that the writer, whoever he may be, is a spy that, under the colour of friendship, has introduced himself into the society of these fanatics, to betray them; the testimony of such a man I cannot put in the balance against the tried loyalty of a youth like Henry Rainsford.”

“Even so the incredulous apostle would not believe till he had seen and touched,” said the king, angrily. “That the conspiracy exists, which is here revealed, I know full well from other sources.”

“I doubt not your Majesty’s intelligence; the fanatics were ever dangerous, but Henry Rainsford is not a fanatic. That he loves the maiden is probable; that the father will use such love as the instrument to tempt him into a participation of any plots now upon the anvil is more than possible; but I repeat it—your Majesty has not a more loyal and devoted subject.”

"Well," said the king, after a brief pause of consideration; "even for your sake the youth shall not be lightly or hastily condemned: and indeed, whether it is the force of old recollections or the power of your language, I am almost convinced that one so young can hardly be a traitor."

"It is the power of truth, my liege."

"We will argue this point no farther, for the present, at least," said the king, good-humouredly; "our long conference has, no doubt, given enough of wonder already to our host, the duke, and his good company, and I would not that this fruit of rebellion should be suspected to exist till the moment comes for its full ripeness, when it may be plucked and crushed."

Saying this, the king broke off the interview, and left the cabinet, followed by Ben Jonson, who felt a double portion of hatred towards the fanatics for having brought his protégé into peril. Could he have seen the youth at his evening meal, he certainly would have acquitted him of all plots against the king or any one, and he might perhaps have

even gone far to doubt his love, seeing that it interfered so little with his appetite.

It had been agreed between the page and his intercessor that the former should stay at the inn till he was sent for; it had even been stipulated that he should keep within doors, or at least walk abroad in places and at times when he was least likely to be met and recognised by any of the company of Burleigh-on-the-Hill. So far as not going near the castle was concerned, the page had kept his compact pretty faithfully; he even kept away from the house of the old presbyterian, well knowing that any attempt to pass the forbidden boundary would lead to a serious rupture; but this restraint grew more irksome from hour to hour, and the seventh day came just in time to prevent him from either throwing himself at the feet of Charles, or carrying off the maiden and asking her consent afterwards. Indeed it may be almost doubted whether it was not this happy state of wavering between two projects equally captivating in his eyes, that prevented him from adopting either.

It was the evening of the appointed meeting between himself and the father of Lucy. Then, and not till then, did some serious mis-giving cross his mind as to the probable result of the interview. What could the old man have to propose to him as the condition of his daughter's hand and his large inheritance? what else could it be but to join some plot against the king?—he would rather have his right hand cut off—and if he refused, as of course he would do, why then he would lose Lucy. All this had, it is true, occurred to him before, but only as a difficulty which might be avoided; now it stood before him in its substance, a huge stumbling-block, which he could neither move out of his way, nor overclimb.

Never had our page reflected so long or so seriously upon any subject before, and, it being to so little purpose, he wisely came to the same conclusion that many others have done before him, resolving to think no more about it, but blindly throw himself upon the current of events.

With this gallant determination, he set out

for the appointed place, and, with lover-like impatience, arrived there at least half an hour before the time. The first dews had scarcely begun to fall, and the lengthened shadows were rather those of evening than of night, when he again stood by the clump of oaks where he had parted from old Amos. Not a soul was visible in the small open glade that was belted in by the forest, or rather wood, for it was too small to deserve the loftier appellation,—when a loud yell from at least a score of voices was heard, and, ere the poor little page could lay hand to his sword, he was surrounded by a troop in Kendal green, vizarded with black masks, who, seizing him by either arm, and flinging a cloak over his head, so as to completely blindfold him, forced him upon a horse in spite of all his struggles, and set off at a round gallop. Luckily for him, he was an excellent horseman, for their course, as if by choice, lay over stock and stone, through bramble and brier, up hill and down hill, so steep as now to well nigh throw him over the haunches of the animal, and now again in so rapid a descent as to almost pitch him over the horse's head. When thoroughly

heated by this exercise, he suddenly felt the water flowing up to the saddle-girths, till, after somewhat more than an hour of such unpleasant alternations, he was roughly dragged from his seat, forced up a flight of stairs, and found himself, as he imagined from the stifled hum of voices, in a large room with many people about him. Scarcely had the door closed upon his entrance, than a voice, not altogether unknown to him, exclaimed, "Hush!" and the murmurs immediately sank into dead silence.

"Feel you aught against your breast?" said the same voice.

"I feel the sharp point of a sword," replied the page.

"You are right," said the unseen speaker; "a circle of naked weapons is pointed about you, and if you move, either from fear or passion, though it were but the tenth part of an inch, you are a dead man, and your blood is upon your own head."

The page was silent.

"Know you where you are?" asked the same voice.

"How should I, being, as you well see,

with my hands bound and my eyes blindfolded?"

"You can guess, however?"

"It may be."

"Speak then."

The page was again silent.

"You will not answer?" said the inquisitor, for to that name he seemed to have a good title—"you will not answer?—be it mine then to instruct you, supposing that yours is the silence of ignorance, and not of obstinacy. You are in the midst of those who have sworn against the throne—or, if Heaven so wills it, against the life—of Charles Stuart."

"Perish the traitors!" exclaimed the page, with a burst of honest indignation; "may every head of them fall upon the scaffold!"

And in the energy of his action he was brought slightly in contact with the naked weapons, but enough so to convince him that his unseen questioners were perfectly in earnest. He thought too that he could even feel the warm flow of blood from his breast and side.

The voice resumed—

"Bethink you, Henry Rainsford, this is no

child's-play; we hold the scales of judgment in our hands—in the one lie wealth and life and the maiden of your love; in the other is the sword to strike; and, light as may be the word in your mouth, it is the straw that will turn the balance. Choose!”

“You must speak more plainly, ere I can answer you,” said the page doggedly.

“Trifle not with us, Henry Rainsford; you have already felt our swords, and know that they are neither pointless, nor edgeless.”

“Speak plainly then; what is it you would have of me?”

“Your hand—your heart—in the good cause; the tyranny of Charles is to be borne no longer; he has trampled upon our rights, both as men and Christians; the whole nation murmurs in secret against him; and we, a chosen few, are the instruments of Heaven's vengeance to hurl the tyrant from his throne. Will you join us?”

“Never!”

“And what is Charles to you, that you should sacrifice your young life for his?”

“What is he?” exclaimed the page indig-

nantly, "he is my KING. In that word, if you had the souls to comprehend it, lies a sacred mystery, second only to that of heaven."

"And if you are fool enough to fling away your life for this idol, have you the farther baseness to sacrifice her, to whom, within the last week, you swore an eternal affection?"

"Henry!" murmured a soft female voice, that seemed half stifled by sobs.

"Lucy!" cried the startled page, who in those tones thought he recognised the voice of his beloved. But no answer was returned, and for several minutes, by the murmurs which followed his exclamation, it seemed that the conspirators were taking counsel. Then a step was heard, as of one slowly pacing up the hall from the extreme end, and the unseen speaker again addressed him. This time his words were briefly and sternly delivered, announcing, as much by their tone as by their import, that his resolution was taken, and his purpose likely to be carried into speedy execution.

"For the last time—will you renounce this fantastical loyalty to a tyrant, join us with heart and hand, and receive Lucy Edgehill

with all her fortune, as the recompense of your patriotism?—You tremble—you hesitate—”

There was a light stir amongst the assembly.

“You will be wise, and cry with us, ‘Down with the tyrant Charles!’”

“Long live king Charles!” shouted the page, “the best friend, the best father, the best husband, the best of monarchs.”

With a single touch of the sword the bonds that held his arms were cut asunder, and he stood in Burleigh Hall, the centre of a glittering ring of lords and ladies. Those who had held their swords to him, now stood with their weapons pointed to the floor; immediately before him was the king, holding Lucy by the right hand, while on the other side of him was the old poet, his stern features rendered sublime, and even handsome, by the expression of innate goodness. The page dropped upon his knee.

“Rise,” said the monarch, with a gracious smile; “I have proved, and found thee worthy of a king’s favour; the plots of the Puritan have been defeated; the sins of the father have been forgiven for the virtues of the child. And

now, you, whom neither wealth nor beauty could lead to dishonour, receive both from my hand, as the recompense of loyalty."

Saying this, the king gently pressed forward Lucy to her lover, and at the same time presented him with a paper, conveying over to him a rich portion of crown lands.

"Thank not me!" exclaimed Charles, as the bewildered page began to stammer out his gratitude; "here is your benefactor," and his arm fell kindly upon the shoulder of the old poet—"this is the man who dared risk his own favour with his king in defence of innocence, though it wore the humble mantle of a poor discarded page—

O RARE BEN JONSON!"

MY FIRST VISIT
TO
THE ISLE OF WIGHT.

OF all the islands that it has ever been my lot to visit, the Isle of Wight is certainly the most beautiful—that is, if you happen to see it on a fine day, which fine day, in the dark, humid climate of Hampshire, occurs about once every two or three months.

In this blessed county, the visits of the sun are something like the appearances of a comet in other parts of the world, a matter for speculation, and the good people of Vectis would do

well to have an almanac of their own, in which such rare events might be calculated after the fashion of eclipses ; as thus—"on such a day, there will be a cloudless sky, and the sun will make his first and only appearance for the spring quarter," whereupon the islanders should all turn out to give him welcome, as a stranger who comes but seldom, and is likely to make but a brief stay amongst them.

But, though I abhor these days of drizzle—drizzle—in which Dame Nature may be compared to a great sulky schoolboy, blubbering over his bread and butter, with red eyes, and dirty-streaked face, I have no objection whatever to a thorough storm, which lends a grandeur to the scene, superior, perhaps, to the quiet beauty of a bright blue sky. And just such a day it was, about the time of the autumnal equinox, when I paid my first visit to Vectis. Cowes, Newport, Ryde, and all the more inhabited portions, which are completely summer pictures, appeared dreary enough; but, once upon the high downs, the scene was glorious beyond description.

Certainly, a hill is not a mountain, nor can a little slip of salt water be dignified into an ocean, by any one except a cockney; and yet, for all that, the scenery of the Island, as the natives term it, may, under certain aspects of the season, be called sublime. When, on a rough winter's morning, you stand upon one of these downs and look around you, it is with the same sort of feeling that you gaze upon a painted landscape, which, in its image of desolation, awakens all the ideas of the sublime, without any of the dangers that belong to the reality.

It may seem an odd way to describe the Isle of Wight (and perhaps, after all, it does not exactly convey to others my feelings on the subject), but I would say that it is a miniature resemblance of all that is beautiful in many countries, combining, in itself, their various attributes. To see it in this point of view, however, you must burn your guide-book, and break the neck of your guide, if he is not to be got rid of on easier terms; the moment you take a companion, either in the shape of a human being, or of a book, the whole beauty of this, as of every scene, vanishes, after a

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fashion truly marvellous. The fact is, you may teach a man, or at least some men, to reason, but to teach them to admire is a thing not to be thought of.

The back of the island is, as I have just observed, the only place for a winter excursion; and this, notwithstanding the many villages that figure in the map, is as pretty a piece of desolation as a reasonable traveller would desire. I should have walked over all these villages in broad day-light, without being aware of their existence, but from the natural spirit of inquiry excited by hunger; then, indeed, I found that some half dozen hovels, placed tolerably close to each other, constituted a village so on I went, famishing and edified, but in high good humour with the whole course of the Undercliff, which comprehends somewhat more than half the way from Shanklin Chine to Black Gang Chine.

It is astonishing how many, and how different from each other, are the objects to be seen in this short space; and if the walk be extended to Freshwater, the route will be complete. I will not stop to describe all of them, nor will

I take those described in their actual order; but will present them to my readers, as the half-faded images brighten and revive upon the recollection. And how singularly, in reverting to the past, does one idea act like a talisman in calling up another! A little while since, before I took the pen into my hand, not a single image of the island was present to memory, yet now, in an instant, a veil seems to have dropped away from between the past and present, and I remember a thousand minute circumstances that bubble up, as it were, from the waves of time.

From St. Catherine's Tower to St. Lawrence's Church is a jump, somewhat after Macbeth's fashion, when he proposed to "jump the life to come;" yet, though recollection started with the former, in the next moment come before me, as freshly as ever, little Mary, the janitress of Saint Lawrence; how proud she was of her church, and of its celebrity as being the smallest in the world! it might indeed have served for the king of Lilliput, and magnates of some kind there must have been in the neighbourhood, for the cockle-shell had pews, and

these, as every reader knows, were confined in the good old times to persons of the first rank.

Apropos de bottes.

In the reign of Elizabeth flourished a Sir John Townley, who thus expresses himself in regard to pews:—

“My man, Shuttleworth, of Hacking, made this form, and here will I sit when I come; and my cousin Howell may make one behind me if he please, and my sonne Sherburne shall make one on the other side, and Mr. Catterall another behind him; and for the residue, the use shall be, first come first speed, and that will make the proud wives of Whalley rise betimes to come to church.”

Much cannot be said for the gallantry of the doughty knight, but he seems to have hit upon a most happy expedient to ensure the early attendance of the female part of his congregation.

On leaving Saint Lawrence, my attention was attracted by a handsome building, the very reverse of the Saint's domicile in point of size.

“What house is that?” asked I.

And the little Mary replied, with a curtsy,
“The Great House, sir.”

“And who lives there?”

A second curtsy, and a look of infinite surprise—“The Great People, sir.”

I never like to spoil a good story, or a good reply, by impertinent questions, so the “Great People” must remain to the reader, as to myself, a profound mystery.

Steephill.—There is a sort of quaint beauty about this spot, which it would be exceedingly difficult to convey an idea of by description. *The Picturesque Pocket Companion* discreetly observes, “It is a place of little consequence, except for its scenery.” Many thanks for the information!—and what the plague should give it a consequence, if not its scenery? Oh, Mr. Kidd! Mr. Kidd! the plates of your neat little volume are really beautiful; but do, pray, in your next edition, follow the Queen’s excellent advice to old Polonius, and give us

“More matter with less art.”

A guide-book should not be altogether like a

very pretty woman with a very silly head, and for this obvious reason — a lady's lips may make amends for the faults of her tongue, but the unlucky book has no such advantage.

In this Eden, the Earl of Dysart had a cottage when I first visited the island; but the property has passed away into other hands, and, as a natural consequence, the cottage has been suffered to fall into decay. There is something exceedingly mortifying to human vanity in such changes; they seem to hint how little posterity, to whom your neglected gentlemen are in the habit of addressing themselves, is likely to think of us or of our concerns. Indeed, if he listened to all our complaints, he would have no time to attend to his own affairs.

The Sand-Rock Spring finds an honourable mention in the Guide-books, why, the compilers of such trivia best know themselves. For my part, I only mention this quackery to caution my readers against being deceived by it. The chalybeate was discovered (so say its admirers) by one Waterworth, an obscure apothecary, and, it is to be presumed, of little

practice, or he would not have found time for spring-hunting. Be this as it may, the spring had been known for years to all the old women of the island, as well as to their mothers and grandmothers before them, but, not having the worldly craft of the pill-vender, the simple souls never thought of bottling up a filthy, useless fluid, and puffing it off as a real elixir vitæ. *Bile tumet jecur*—my bile rises at the thought, as it once did at the taste of this abomination.

Black-Gang Chine.—This is one of the most remarkable features in the island. It is an immense, savage-looking chasm, torn out of the solid rock, or, to speak correctly, the cliff; for the precipice, which is here about five hundred feet above the level of the sea, has neither stone nor chalk in its rugged sides. From the top splashes, or rather creeps, a thin, discoloured stream; and, following this in its descent, I had nearly tumbled over a second declivity, when I fancied myself already on a level with the shore. Having, luckily, escaped from this awkward chance, I blundered on through mud and mire to the sands, or rather to the shingle, for the whole beach con-

sists of nothing better. It was a glorious sight to one who loves the sea. The waves were coming in six feet abreast, and bursting with a noise to which the thunder of an English storm is as nothing. I could have dreamed over such a scene for ever—which means as long as my legs and my appetite would let me.

Really, there is something very delightful in these day-dreams, this mental intoxication, which has all the exhilarating effects of wine, without the intolerable head-ache of the next morning. To be sure, it is sometimes followed by the heart-ache, when the wandering spirit returns from its silent and blissful communings with Nature to the harsh realities of life. In my case, however, there was somewhat less than the usual chance of this invisible and unacknowledged malady, inasmuch as I narrowly missed breaking my neck in my attempt to re-ascend the cliff. By this time, it was well nigh dusk, and before I had got half way up the rock, I had missed the usual path, if path it could be called, and was with no little difficulty clambering up a cliff that every moment grew more and more perpendicular.

My early days in Kent had somewhat accustomed me to this sort of work, yet, still I did not feel too comfortable. The wind, moreover, which had indulged in a lull for the last two or three hours, was rising fast; and suddenly a squall came whistling and bellowing about my ears, that, had it reached me a minute sooner, must have infallibly have ended all my troubles in this world. Just as the blast began to strike me, I had got to an open rift or channel in the rock leading upward; into this I flung myself at once, regardless of the mud and brambles; and lucky it was for me that I did so; nothing could have stood up against the beating of those iron wings, which for full ten minutes lashed at me with uncontrollable violence. By that time its fury ceased, though the wind was still high enough to have torn a mill-sail to pieces, and great was my joy when I found myself safe again on the top of the precipice. It must be exceedingly unpleasant, that same breaking of the neck, I calculate—a thing to be eschewed if possible; unless, indeed, you happen to be in love, and I — alas the day! — was only married.

Not far from here is Scratchell's Bay, remarkable for its fossils, but the account of them belongs to another time and another place. There is, however, an anecdote connected with this spot, that may prove useful to the married portion of his Majesty's lieges, though I must cross the Solent, rough as the evening is, for the commencement of my tale.

In the register of the church of Lymington, is a memorandum under the year, 1736, to the effect that "Samuel Baldwyn, Esq. sojourner of this parish, was immersed, without the Needles, in Scratchell's Bay, *sans ceremonie*, May 20th." This was performed in consequence of an earnest wish he had expressed a little before his dissolution; and what reason dost thou think, reader, could urge him to have his body cast into the ocean, rather than quietly committed to the earth? no motive of erring superstition, no whim of bewildered reason, but a determination to disappoint the intentions of an affectionate wife, who had repeatedly assured him in their domestic squabbles, which were very frequent, that if, Providence permitted her to survive him, she would

revenge her conjugal sufferings by occasionally dancing over the turf that covered his remains.

Such is the grave relation of the Hampshire historian, who no doubt thought it a serious matter, or he would not have introduced it into so solemn a work as his ponderous quartos. Peace be to the manes of Squire Baldwyn!—Poor fellow! his living body must have had a sad time of it, or his last will and testament lied most abominably. Has the spirit of his lady any thing to do, I wonder, with this wild weather—with the howling of the wind and the roaring of the waters? Heaven bless me! I am getting sentimental, when the best thing I can do is to get home, for the shades of evening are closing round me.

The lights from Yarmouth—not the Yarmouth so celebrated for its fine herrings and its bad roadstead, but a snug little town so named—gleamed invitingly from the distance. But the spirit of Mr. Baldwyn, I suppose, urged me on in spite of weary limbs and the encroaching darkness; and, like a Paladin of old, I resolved to brave fatigue and night, and

return by the same way I had come. This plan, commenced in freak, I would seriously advise my readers to pursue in their next visit to the island, abating always the absurdity of clambering up rocks, where no one has any business that I know of, except the sea-gulls and the puffins. What I mean is, commence your trip a little after the sun has risen, while every thing yet wears its morning face, and return by the same road when the shadows of night begin to fall. The change, arising from the different aspect of the hour, will be more striking than any that could be gained from the change of route. At least, I have always found it so in all my excursions, whether at home or abroad.

The Under Cliff at Evening.—The rocks loomed out larger from the twilight; the hills looked blacker and loftier; the sea rolled more darkly, more coldly; and the waves seemed, like some wild beasts, to have grown bolder from the absence of day. In one part of the road, or rather way,—for road there was none, in the civilized meaning of the word,—I could almost have fancied myself approaching the

remains of some ancient city — one of those primæval ruins, that, like the ruins in America, we can only account for by supposing they existed before the deluge. The ground was covered with rocky fragments of all sizes, some bare, but discoloured by time, some covered with moss, others again half hid by shrubs and weeds; but all bearing, more or less, a fanciful resemblance to broken capitals and disjointed pillars. The way itself was a broad ledge, many feet in width, closed in on one side by a perpendicular wall of rock, while below, at the distance of many feet, lay a second rugged strip, or platform, which was beaten by the roaring waters of the Solent. While I was still wrapt in my own fancies, fashioning more strange shapes from the darkness than ever child imagined in the burning embers of a coal-fire, the moon suddenly burst forth from the clouds that had oppressed her, and in her doubtful light the landscape put on another form. It was as if the whole scene had been touched by the rod of some fairy — and, by the bye, the elves, when they were allowed to exist at all, were particularly fond of the island.

Below, at no very great distance, lay Puck-aster Cove, which the antiquarians assert has derived its name from the tricky spirit; and about Gad's Hill still clings the traditionary legend of fairy opposition to the erection of a church on any site but the one they had themselves chosen. Then too, there is Puck Pool—but that is far off; and so too is my little inn, and it is getting late. Via, my friends, for the most curious adventure of the twenty-four hours is yet to come.

Heartily glad was I to find myself once again in my temporary home, snugly seated before a comfortable fire, with certain necessary accompaniments upon the table, in the shape of cold ham, fowl, beef, ale, and brandy. If I had toiled hard for an appetite, I had fully achieved my object, as the poultry relics, the polished bone of the ham, and the empty jug, in a short time abundantly testified. Now there are some folks who pretend to be mightily indifferent to such matters; if they are sincere, they are blockheads; if not, they are hypocrites.

Next to the luxury of a good supper is a

good bed; but, somehow, even a bed is not always one of roses, as I was doomed to experience on this eventful night. Such dreams!—such horrid dreams! I was tossing on the ocean, and as the vessel plunged and tore through the water, I felt all the hurry and dizziness of an inexperienced rider, when his horse runs away with him for the first time. It was like any thing but sailing. The speed of the ship was preternatural, and the cloths snorted, rather than flapped, when the wind dragged them from the bolt-ropes. Then the crew mutinied; but they were like no crew that had ever been seen before. They had vizarded themselves from all manner of wild beasts; some wore the face of the wolf, some of the tiger, others again of the jackall, and not a few growled about me as lions, or chattered at me with the heads of monkeys. The ludicrous never was so horrible, or the horrible so ludicrous. By a strange transition, I escaped from these monsters to the cliff, by Black-Gang Chine, and dreamed over again the perils of the evening. But now I knew it was a dream; I had an indistinct con-

sciousness that if I would only let go my hold, and fling myself down at once, I should wake, or at all events this painful vision would pass away. With no little difficulty I accomplished this, and awoke. I had far better have continued in my uneasy sleep. By the side of my bed sate a venerable, but stern, old man, whose eyes were fixed upon me with a severe gaze, while the forefinger of his right hand pointed to the page of a volume that lay open in his left. As the window was opposite to the foot of the bed, and the curtains had remained undrawn, the broad moon, now in all her lustre, shone full in his face and upon the book. I started up and gazed in wonder, while a creeping thrill of awe came over me. Still the finger pointed to the open page, and, obeying the mandate thus held out, I endeavoured to read, but in vain; the letters danced and flitted about the leaf, forming all manner of combinations, yet never remaining long enough in the same position for me to catch the purport.

The old man's brow grew yet sterner with impatience, and an angry fire seemed to light

up his cold grey eyes. Again I endeavoured to fix the capricious lines, as much from a secret and undefined dread as from curiosity. This time I succeeded, and a groan of horror escaped me as I read the wavering letters; it was a prophetic page in the history of my life, the record of an event that was yet to be, but of so appalling an import that I would rather have read a tale of murder; it struck a blow at the peace of one I loved with a passion beyond the power of words to tell it. Love!—Love!—why have the poets painted thee as a young and innocent child? they should rather have shown thee in the guise and with the attributes of a devil, for you make devils of the best of us.

The old man took no notice of my horror, though the feeling was much too strong not to have found its visible reflection in my face. So much of his errand seemed to be done, and he again proceeded busily to turn over the leaves, pausing every now and then upon a fresh page, but always going on again with a dissatisfied shake of his head, as if the object of his search was yet to be found. About the middle of the

volume, it appeared that he had stumbled upon what he wanted, for he fixed his eyes, as before, upon me, and pointed with his finger to the open page. It was a glimpse—only a glimpse—I caught of the happy future, when the old man hastily closed the volume, and, with all his features relaxed into a benevolent smile, slowly passed into the room that adjoined my bed-chamber, and which, like it, was on the ground-floor.

For the first moment the idea flashed across me that I was the dupe of some idle deception. Starting up, I hurried into the parlour, and saw the old man passing over the grass-plot in front of the French windows. How he had got there was to me incomprehensible, for the window was still bolted; and when I opened it to follow him, the cold air that rushed in almost stifled me, and he was gone. Did I dream?—impossible; every thing was too palpable to the sense for dreaming. Was I the dupe of some childish plot?—that was just as unlikely, for in the first place no human ingenuity could have carried the thing so far, and

in the next, if possible, no end whatever could have been answered by all this outlay of time and trouble. Might I not be the victim of the same sort of illusion that tormented the famous Nicolai, the Berlin bookseller, who was daily and hourly visited by spectral shadows, the consequences of an overwrought brain? I thought so at the time—I think so still; my mind and body had both, in the course of the day, been stretched beyond the healthy point of tension, and a passing fever, of which I was not myself conscious, might have been the result.

But after all, what is *real*? Some philosophers have said that nothing is—and are they not right? May not life itself be the dream of another mode of existence? But I am getting into a chapter that certainly does not belong to the regions of romance and fiction.

Farewell, therefore, gentle reader; and should you be disposed for another little excursion in my favourite island, I shall be most happy to accompany you. Perhaps we may pay a visit together to the smugglers. I will hold you

harmless, for they are old acquaintances of mine, and, notwithstanding their rough faces and rugged manners, you will find this "terrible gente," as Napoleon called them, more amusing than a host of the last fashionable novels.

THE DESERTED CASTLE.

THE first flakes of snow were falling on the pleasant fields about Ilmenstein just as the two friends reached the gates of the city.

“Well then,” said the younger, “if you will not go with me to my bride, and must positively set out on your journey to-day, here let us part; but do not fail, Hubert, to come back again to my wedding. Remember—*the Day of the Three Kings.*”

An unusual gloom darkened the brow of Hubert. He pressed his friend hastily to his breast, and departed in silence.

"What can have come over him again?" said Bernhard to himself; "some melancholy foreboding, I suppose; but there 's little use in thinking of it."

And he did not think of it long, for a few minutes brought him to the house of the father of his betrothed, and the welcome sounds of mirth from within in an instant chased away all melancholy fancies. On entering he found the family circle of aunts and cousins assembled, and, after the usual greetings, he sank quietly into a vacant place by the side of his Elizabeth, whose dark eyes beamed with affection as she gently murmured, "I expected you before."

"Forgive me," replied Bernhard; "I had many visits to make to my patients. In walking out afterwards to breathe the fresh air, I was met by my friend Hubert, and, so carried away were we both by our conversation that before we were aware of it we found ourselves by the *Deserted Castle*, from the windows of which, strange to say, the light of many tapers was streaming."

"Merciful powers!" exclaimed Aunt Cuni-

gunda; the light of tapers in the Deserted Castle! Then may the heavens protect us!—or protect you rather, maidens and bachelors of our goodly city, for it concerns you most!”

A solemn warning of this kind was enough to rouse the curiosity of all, and a general prayer followed that the old lady would gratify them by telling her story.

“It is no story, no fiction,” said Aunt Cuni-gunda, sighing. “What I have to tell is the simple truth, and it happened long, long before any of you—even the eldest—were born. Aye, my great grandmother was a child, not more than ten years old, when the castle was sold to a young man, who was called plainly Mr. Willibald, though his wealth and manners showed that he belonged to the righer ranks. But what made the stranger yet more remarkable was his singular perfection of face and form, which worked, like magic, on all the females of our city, filling them at once with love, and fear, and wonder.

“His first object was to improve and furnish his castle, and having done this, he brought home his bride, whose name we afterwards

learnt was Alswitha, and whose singular beauty proved as powerful a magnet to our youths as his own had done to our maidens. There was an irresistible fascination in her look and voice, that acted like those of the fabled Circe on all beholders. To see her was to love, and that not in the every-day meaning of the word, but to desperation.

“ For a long time—it might be for two or three years—the young couple seemed to be warmly and mutually attached ; but by degrees a change was observed in both parties, and first on the side of the husband. The handsome Willibald gave himself up to the beauties of the city, who, it seems, lent too ready an ear to his fascinations ; and, if the fair Alswitha did not exactly follow his pernicious example, she at least soon ceased to regard her husband with love, and that feeling of indifference was not long in degenerating into aversion. Even the circumstance of her having children, in general the strongest of all ties, made no change in her sentiments. These first and only born were twins. The boy, who bore the name, had also the features

of his father ; while the little Alswitha was not less like her mother.

“One morning, on returning from a banquet that had lasted through the night to that late hour, Willibald chanced to find Alswitha alone in an arbour of the beautiful castle garden. It was long since they had thus met. Alswitha turned pale, and, as for a moment the feeling of other and better times came over the mind of her husband, he exclaimed, ‘Forgive me, Alswitha!’ The hand that he had taken so rapturously remained cold and motionless in his grasp. He dropped it, exclaiming mournfully, ‘Do you then love me no longer?’

“‘No,’ was the icy reply. ‘Leave the girl to me, and let me fly far, far from this hated place.’

“Such an answer at once froze up the opening spring of better feelings. He gave a silent assent, and the next day Alswitha had left the castle, without giving the slightest clue to her intended place of refuge.

“A sudden change came over Willibald. To his former wild and dissolute passion for women succeeded a decided and unconquerable

hatred for the whole sex. Henceforth he was never seen in the city, but, retiring within his castle and his private grounds, he devoted all his time to the education of the boy, whom he sedulously endeavoured to bring up with his own feelings of antipathy towards all of woman-kind.

“ In this manner years had passed, when one day a female, of tall stature, and though of middle age yet still beautiful, entered the precincts of the *Deserted Castle*, leading by the hand a maiden, who to all appearance was scarcely in her fifteenth year. In silence she paced the blooming gardens, and suddenly stopped before the arbour in which Willibald was sitting with his son. A single glance was sufficient, ‘ Alswitha !’ ‘ Willibald !’ was exclaimed by either party at the same moment. The father gazed with transport on his newly-found daughter, the mother on her son ; but, when either advanced to embrace the object of awakening love, the seeds of the hatred which each had been sowing bore its fatal harvest. The girl, as she had been taught, shrunk back in horror from the man ; the boy,

no less faithful to his lesson, recoiled from the touch of his mother. A momentary fit of despair, akin to madness, possessed Alswitha; she flung herself into a lake close by, and, impelled by a similar feeling, Willibald shared the same fate. Their bodies were not found; but ever, in the midnight hour, two pale shadows haunted the castle, till the twins were driven from it, and only the gardener with his wife remained to take care of the building and the beautiful grounds.

“After the lapse of a few years, the twins returned in all the bloom of youth and beauty; but, as it seemed, for no other purpose than to follow the example of their parents in ruining the peace of families. This was the only point in which the brother and sister were ever known to agree, and for this their extraordinary personal attractions lent them great facilities, till the general outcry drove them from their castle.

“There was a second lapse of years during which the castle remained quite quiet, till at last another of Willibald’s descendants appeared, bringing with him ruin to many families,

and yet no way could be found to punish him, since the breaking of hearts does not come under the cognizance of any criminal tribunal. After a time, however, he left the place of his own accord, and again all was quiet in the castle, that was left as before to the care of the old gardener, who was now assisted by a son.

“Twenty years had thus passed away, when two twin descendants of Willibald suddenly made their appearance, to the great alarm of all the city. But the only change brought by their presence was that the garden grew more beautiful than ever. There was, however, one circumstance which many people connected with them. The fairest maiden of the city drowned herself on her wedding-day from love to the castle-lord, and the handsomest of our youths disappeared at the same time with the twins. Since then, for many, many years, the castle has not been haunted, and people had begun to hope that the shades of the suicides had gotten rest; and now you tell us, Bernhard, of lights being visible in the castle.

May Heaven protect all you young people!"

It was a few days after this, when the early snow had melted, and the green turf showed itself, that Elizabeth, with her lover and two female friends, was about to take a walk in the environs of the city. But it so happened that Bernhard was called to a patient, and the young maidens, left to themselves, by chance rather than from any predetermined intention, found themselves in the neighbourhood of the *Deserted Castle*. The sight of the building naturally recalled to their minds the story they had so lately heard, but, as it seemed, with very various results.

"Do you believe in Aunt Cunigunda's tale?" said Elizabeth.

The calm, quiet Agnes replied, "I believe only when I have undeniable proofs, and contest nothing against which I cannot bring undeniable arguments."

"I *do* believe it," said Helena, crossing herself, "and would not go into the garden for the world."

"Then I will," said Elizabeth ; "the thought of my Bernhard will protect me from every danger."

The entreaties of her companions availed nothing to stop her. While they yet remonstrated, she had thrown open the garden-gate and passed the fated threshold, and in a few minutes they lost sight of her amongst the shrubs, through which the path wound its way. Neither had the courage to follow, though even at this late season a warm perfumed air came gently breathing from the shrubberies and invited them to enter.

An hour had passed away, and still Elizabeth did not come back. What should they do? venture into the garden to see what had become of her? or return to the city, and tell what had happened? This last seemed the best way of proceeding, and they were about to adopt it, when their lost companion made her appearance, bearing a wreath in her hand and a singular flower in her bosom. Her face wore an expression of inward joy, but her manner was abstracted, nor could all the questioning of her inquisitive friends obtain anything

but evasive answers, from which, however, it was plain that she had seen or heard something more than usual. On parting from them, she extorted a solemn promise that they would say nothing to any one of her visit to the garden.

From this day there was a visible change in Elizabeth—a change that was differently interpreted according to the temper of the observer. The father attributed it to the capricious moodiness of a bride, the mother concluded she was jealous, and Bernhard, with professional bias, imagined she was ill. Whatever was the cause, the nearer the wedding-day approached, the more remarkable became the alteration. The only thing that seemed to give her any pleasure was the going to church, and, at such times, she never would allow any one to go with her. Often did Bernhard think of his friend, Hubert, and his melancholy forebodings at their parting, which now seemed to be realised. The heart of Elizabeth was evidently estranged from him without his being able to surmise the cause, while on his part was all the consciousness of true and ardent passion.

He was one day reflecting upon all this, in a melancholy mood, when the door of his room was abruptly thrown open, and a strange servant entered with a letter. It was written in a neat female hand, and the contents were as follows:—

“An invalid requests your aid and sympathy. If you would save my life, follow the servant who will guide you to me. But on one condition only can I accept your help—you must suffer your eyes to be bound, and the bandage to remain till you are in my chamber.

“ARMIDA.”

“A strange request!” exclaimed the physician; “but it is my vocation to assist the sick, and I will not refuse it.”

With this hasty resolution he suffered his eyes to be bound, and was placed in a carriage, which instantly set off at full speed; nor did he exchange a single word with his conductor. The fact is, he was both brave and romantic, had a great curiosity to see so strange a patient, and, in case of the worst, relied upon his sword, in the use of which he was remarkably dexterous.

At length the carriage stopped, and the servant conducted him up a flight of steps, evidently leading from a garden, for the air was redolent with the perfume of many flowers. Door after door opened and again closed after them, showing that they were passing through an extensive suite of apartments, at the end of which the servant removed the bandage from his eyes, and disappeared.

The physician found himself in a splendid chamber. The rarest exotics, in crystal vases, stood around an alcove that was veiled by curtains of white silk, embroidered with gold, and having its picturesque folds held up by roses. On a sudden this veil flew back, and discovered to the eyes of the astonished Bernhard a female of surpassing beauty reclining upon a couch.

"Are you the physician?" she said, in a low, musical voice, that thrilled to his very heart.

Surprise for a moment held him dumb.

"Are you the physician?" repeated the invalid.

"I am, lady," was at length the reply—and

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she held out a small white hand, the pulse of which beat feverishly.

"No rest! no rest!" exclaimed the invalid. "For three days and nights I have not closed my eyes, and the blood in my veins seems to be liquid fire. It is horrible."

Was it awe—was it pity—or was it admiration, that filled the mind of Bernhard?—he knew not—but there were tears in his eyes, and hesitation in his voice, and his hand trembled as he felt that hurried pulse and endeavoured to calm the troubled spirit by assurances of a speedy recovery.

An hour had thus passed with the rapidity almost of minutes, when the bandage was replaced, and the same servant, who had been his guide hither, conducted him back to his own home.

Silence is the first duty of a physician; the visits, therefore, of Bernhard to the fair unknown remained a mystery even to his most intimate friends. Neither did he make any inquiries as to the name or abode of his patient, though every evening, as soon as it was dusk, the same servant came for him with the carriage.

Judging, however, from the speed and duration of his journey, the house was more than a mile from the city.

At first he imagined that his incognita was a lady of rank, who, on account of some dispute or some false step, had been thus banished, as it were, by her family; but a short time convinced him that he had done her injustice, and eventually he could think of nothing but her, so infatuated was he by the magic of her beauty. Hence it happened that he was now seldom seen in Walter's house, excusing himself by the press of business, an excuse that was believed by the parents, while Elizabeth received it not only calmly, but with evident satisfaction.

In a short time the hearts of the lovers were completely estranged from each other. Bernhard ceased to excuse his prolonged and increasing absence, and Elizabeth scarcely seemed to miss him. The parents began to wonder, but were silent, and, as the marriage was put off on account of Walter's brother being under the necessity of travelling for a few weeks on business, there seemed to be a very

fair chance of its never taking place at all.

In the meantime Christmas came round, and Bernhard, who, from 'earliest childhood, had never failed to be at Walter's house on Christmas eve, was led by the force of habit to pay his customary visit. As he was on his way, it occurred to him that he had thought of no gift of the for Elizabeth, and, that he might bring season her something rare as well as beautiful, he went home, and made a choice rather from some secret impulse than from any exercise of volition.

The whole immediate family of Walter, as well as his distant relations, were collected in the great dinner-room. The master of the house was enjoying the delight of his guests in their Christmas presents, when Bernhard entered, and under the same singular and uncontrollable impulse laid before his bride a purple-coloured exotic in a brilliant vase of crystal.

All were no less gratified than astonished at the appearance of this beautiful plant; and Elizabeth, in the surprise of the moment, ex-

claimed, "How exquisite! how beautiful!—there are no lovelier flowers even in—"

She broke off suddenly; but her thought was of the gardens of the *Deserted Castle*, and, hardly knowing what she did, she presented him in return with the wreath that she had brought thence in her first visit.

From this moment commenced a change as abrupt and as singular as had been their previous estrangement. The moist eye, the glowing cheek, the faint smile of either betrayed the returning recollection of other days. Elizabeth sighed deeply, and Bernhard thought to himself, though he forbore to give it utterance,—“Oh, why is it not as it used to be with us?”

“Why is it not as it used to be with us?” repeated Bernhard to himself as he sat in his lonely chamber. “Am I no longer the same, or does some secret power govern me? As a child, I kissed the hand of the infant in the cradle; as a boy I loved the girl; as a man I adored the woman, and now!——

“And who is this strange syren that has made me false to Elizabeth—to myself? I do not love her—though at times I am mad, when I look upon those burning eyes, those rosy lips luscious as the sun-fed peach; yet, by Heavens, I do not love her—I hate her—I hate myself!—”

In saying this he only spoke the truth, and yet the hearts of the bridal pair were far from being reconciled. It was almost as if some mysterious, but invisible, power had stepped between them and kept them asunder.

Time passed on, when at length his friend, Hubert, unexpectedly returned, and surprised him in one of those moods of melancholy abstraction that had now become frequent with him, and which threatened to produce a fatal indifference to his better interests.

“I have come back before the day of the Three Kings,” exclaimed Hubert; but, as if suddenly struck by his altered manner, he added — “and if I had waited till then, it seems I should only have come too soon.”

“You have come in good time,” said Bern-

hard, grasping his hand warmly, though sadly; "my heart is full to overflowing."

And he began, forthwith, the story of all that had past, to which Hubert listened with silent attention, interrupted only at times by an impatient gesture that marked as much surprise as discontent. But no sooner had the physician ceased, than he exclaimed—

"Is it possible that you never loosened the bandage?—that you never tried to find out with whom you had been? But the length of the way does not deceive me; you have been in the *Deserted Castle*, and that beautiful woman is—"

"Nonsense, nonsense!" interrupted Bernhard; "*you* surely do not believe in those idle tales?" But though he spoke this jestingly, his lip quivered, and his cheek turned pale.

Hubert shook his head thoughtfully, and for a moment was silent. At length he said, without returning a direct answer—

"Act like a man, and should you need a friend, rely upon Hubert."

Two days after this, Armida's servant came

again to fetch the physician, and Bernhard followed as before, but on getting out of the carriage he lifted up the bandage, and saw the *Deserted Castle* lit up, ghost-like, by the pale moonshine.

The smile that was on the lip of Armida died away, and her cheek lost its colour when she saw the unwonted gravity of her physician. "He knows all," she involuntarily murmured.

"I know all!" repeated Bernhard, sternly; "this is the *Deserted Castle*, and my senses have been the dupe of some infernal jugglery."

The cheek of Armida grew yet paler, and her whole frame was strongly agitated.

"Speak, woman!" thundered Bernhard; "is then the ancient tale of the syren no fable?—Have I, indeed, been fascinated to my ruin?"

"Bernhard!" exclaimed the mysterious beauty, wringing her hands, "pity me—pity the ill-starred descendant of Willibald and Alswitha. The curse of hate that was on our ancestors had descended on myself and my brother; I, too, abhorred men, as he detested all of womankind, our only object being to delude and destroy; but I saw and

loved you, and from that hour the wrongs inflicted by our race have recoiled upon myself. I love, and am rejected, and must die as so many have died through us — of a broken heart.”

It was a dangerous moment for Bernhard. Before him, on her knees, was the fairest of her sex, her eyes filled with tears, her cheeks flushed with passion, and every feature speaking the silent eloquence of love. He, too, felt his heart bound, and the blood glow in his veins. It was in vain that he tried to think, to reflect on the past and the future. All was confusion in his brain, the flitting of incongruous ideas and shapes, the passing of shadows before his eyes, the ringing of voices in his ears, till he felt he was well nigh mad. By one strong effort he rushed from the room; a fearful shriek of agony followed his departure, that seemed to his excited fancy to be echoed and re-echoed as he darted through the gardens; but on he went, almost unconscious of the road he was taking.

The night-air blew coldly and refreshingly upon his brow; the stars, too, were shining bright-

ly ; and by degrees his heart beat more quietly, though the tears still stood in his eyes. Never would he again see Armida, and, oh, she had looked more lovely to-day than ever ! And why not return to her ? He would. But at the very moment when he turned from the city-gates, a cold hand seized his, and a well-known voice said—

“ Heaven be praised, that I have found you, sir ; I have been seeking you this hour, for your betrothed, Elizabeth, is dying.”

These words recalled the physician to himself ; he recognised, in the speaker, Walter’s servant, and followed him hastily to the house of his betrothed.

He found Elizabeth in a high fever, and perfectly delirious. The physician, who had in his absence been called in, had given her over, and a priest was consequently waiting in the next room for a sane interval, that he might administer the sacrament. But of this there seemed to be no chance, and, just as Bernhard entered, he quitted the house.

It was midnight. Bernhard had been a lonely watcher for the last three hours by the bed of his bride. The falling embers of the fire cast fitful shadows upon the walls of the half-darkened chamber, the wax taper was flickering in the socket, and the death-watch gave out his ominous "tick, tick, tick!" that, in spite of all his philosophy, sounded fearfully on the ear of the excited Bernhard. It was then that a voice seemed to murmur his name.

"Did you speak, Elizabeth?" he exclaimed, moving nearer to the bed; but the eyes of his bride were closed in sleep, and her cheeks were intensely flushed.

"Bernhard!" repeated the same low voice.

Again he looked. It was indeed Elizabeth who spoke. The brain was at work even in slumber, and the tongue imperfectly obeyed its summons.

In a few minutes she opened her eyes full upon him, but there was no consciousness in her gaze, and, though she now spoke more connectedly, it was plainly the speech of delirium.

"I was in the garden of the *Deserted Castle*,

and there I saw him—HIM!—there was the fascination of the snake in his eye!—his voice so sweet!—his face and form so beautiful! I would have fled, but could not—it was as if some spell had rooted me to the spot. The next day I saw him in the church. He conjured me to meet him again in the winter garden, but the bride of Bernhard refused. Still a secret impulse, a feeling I could not control, led me to the same church, at the same hour, and there I always found him. He asked me for my hand, and Bernhard had neglected me! I bade him demand me of my father. From that day I have never seen him, and ah! since then I have pined away—away—in an inexpressible longing after the magic gardens, a feeling that I could not name, though it has consumed me. Next—how the shadows of the past are thronging upon me!—aye, next, I gave—it was by chance—but I gave the wreath of those mystic gardens to Bernhard, and a change came over my spirit, so sad! and yet so sweet! I seemed to myself like a pilgrim, returning from a foreign land, who again hears the well-known sound of his village bells, and

sees before him the cottage in which he was born, while the very flowers in the garden show to him like the friends of yesterday. Bernhard! dear Bernhard!"

And again, as she murmured these words, she dropt off into a deep slumber, but this time it was as quiet as it was profound. The flush of fever had left her cheeks, and there was a sweet expression of calmness upon every feature. All his old feelings towards Elizabeth were revived at once in the bosom of Bernhard. He trembled for her life.

More than a week had thus passed, and it was now the Eve of the Day of the Three Kings. Bernhard was alone with his fair patient, who suddenly awoke, as if from a dream, in the full possession of her senses, and exclaimed—

"Are you still with me, dear Bernhard? I fear I must have been a sad plague to you; but I am better, much better, now, and hope to requite you for all your anxiety."

She gave her hand to him, which he kissed and pressed to his breast, while she went on with a languid smile—

"Has not some one been telling me a tale? or have I really been in the gardens of the *Deserted Castle*? my memory is so treacherous."

Bernhard prudently evaded the question by saying, "Aunt Cunigunda used to tell many strange stories of the castle, and you probably have been dreaming of them."

"No doubt," replied Elizabeth, from whose features the last signs of inquietude vanished at this suggestion; "it must be so; much in this life is no better than a dream, but my love to you, dear Bernhard, is a reality, that can only pass with life itself."

How shall language detail the feelings of such a moment? It is impossible.

A few weeks afterwards, there was much talk in the city of the handsome and happy bridal pair, Elizabeth and Bernhard. But amidst those joyous sounds came some sadder notes of a singularly beautiful novice in Saint Clair's Nunnery, who had been carried off by a stately cavalier from the "*Deserted Castle*."

From this time forth the shadows, that had been used to hover over the stream, were no longer visible. The Castle, too, was never again lit up, but has gradually fallen into ruins, that encumber the ground amidst docks and nettles ; but its legend still remains, like the epitaph on the grave of the departed.

THE THREE SPIRITS.

My uncle was a prodigious story-teller—I don't mean that he indulged in a propensity to fibbing—but like the Sultana of the "Arabian Nights," his brain was a reservoir of tales that seemed perfectly inexhaustible. Judging of his forehead by craniological rules, I could not fancy them to be his invention—and yet how else could he come by them?—to the best of my knowledge he never read anything but "Carey's Book of Roads," for he was a prodigious traveller. But whencesoever the tale came, he was in great requisition with us, who formed the younger part of his establishment

particularly in the long winter evenings. Like the Sultana already alluded to, he was sure to find a Dinarzade at his elbow, to jog his memory when it happened to slumber.

Suppose us all seated round the Christmas fire ; the wood blazes, the hearth is clean swept, and the servant retires with the tea-things. In a great arm-chair sits my aunt, half-dozing over her knitting ; on the opposite side is my uncle, his little bright eyes twinkling with good humour and penetration ; and around is a formidable array of us, his seven nephews and nieces, a handsome legacy, as he used to say, from his deceased brother.

According to his usual wont at this part of the evening, the pipe was in my uncle's mouth ; this, as it was a custom, I was never disposed to find fault with ; but when, as on the present occasion, he indulged in a second pipe, I must honestly own it encroached not a little on my patience. But there was no help for it ; to all our entreaties, not to say grumblings, was a laugh of those little bright eyes, and a " puff ! puff ! " till he fairly puffed out pipe the second.

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“And now,” said my uncle, “I am ready for you. I’ll tell you a true story—as true as if it were in print—and it happened to myself.”

“Tell! — tell! — tell!” cried the seven younger voices in chorus.

“Will! — will! — will!” responded my uncle. And thus he began.

“I was travelling to Southampton by the mail. The ground was covered with snow, the wind blew a hurricane, and the night was so intensely cold that when the coach stopped at Alton, where they allowed a few minutes’ space for refreshment, my limbs were almost frozen. You may easily suppose I was glad to find myself before a good fire, and a well-spread table. Yet there was not much to boast of in the room either; it was a low, old-fashioned place, with a well-sanded floor, and in one corner was that horror of horrors to my fancy—a Dutch clock. I don’t know why, but I never could abide that compound of brass and wood—and the present fellow was particularly disagreeable to me. Above the dial-plate was a little figure of a Saracen, with huge goggling eyes, that rolled to and fro by the action of the

watch-work within ; what's worse, he squinted most abominably. For all that I did'nt neglect my supper ; on the contrary, I was busily employed discussing a second rummer of hot brandy and water, when the guard came in with his usual—' Ready, Sir.' ”

“ ‘ Directly,’ ” said I, filling up a third goblet.

“ The horn sounded—‘ Ta—ra—ra ! ’ ”

“ ‘ Confound it,’ said I, ‘ the brandy is so hot.’ ”

“ ‘ Ta—ra—ra,’ said the horn again.

“ ‘ You may wait,’ said I rather waspishly, as a man who was loth to leave good liquor.

“ Another flourish of the detestable horn.

“ The clatter of horses’ feet on the hard ground followed, and the waiter, bustling in, somewhat superfluously informed me that the coach had gone. I never bore a disappointment better in my life. Without a single remark—which, indeed, would have been useless—I ordered a bowl of punch to be brought in, and fresh wood to be heaped upon the fire. There was nothing left for it, but to make myself comfortable—and comfortable I was—never

more so in my life, except for the ticking of that horrible Dutchman, and the squinting of the little goggle-eyed Saracen.

“ ‘I wish the fellow who made it was at the devil,’ quoth I.

“ ‘Tick, tick, tick,’ replied the Dutchman. A death-watch could ’nt have been half so unpleasant.

“ ‘Tick, tick, tick—roll, roll, roll.’

“ There was something ominous in the sound; and as the wind howled about the chimneys, and the hail pattered against the windows, I began to feel first odd—then cold—then alarmed; for the more I listened the more singular was the ‘tick, tick,’ of the Dutchman. It was evident the clock was talking to me, and I really thought I began to understand his language. In the midst of my terror a whimsical thought came over me, and I could n’t help holding up the punch-bowl to Meinheer, and exclaiming—‘ You must be thirsty after so much talking; suppose you drink?’

“ At this moment there was a fierce gust of wind that seemed to shake the house to its very foundation, and the spirit of the clock—

for there certainly was a spirit in it—groaned heavily, ‘Tick, tick, tick,’—and the Saracen rolled his eyes as if he were mad. But the dead pause that followed was still more awful, and the voice of the clock in the silence sounded yet more solemnly. On a sudden the ticking ceased, and the eyes stood still; a loud whizzing of wheels followed, and in the next moment the clock fell to the ground and was shivered to pieces like so much glass. Amidst the shower of flying atoms up started three strange beings, that, like the beasts in the Apocalypse, set language at defiance. The first was an indefinable compound of the eagle and the human being. The second had the appearance of a man of gigantic stature, with a lofty brow, upon which sat determination, while the muscles of his chest and arms swelled with restless energy. The third wore the form of Venus, as poets have described her when she rose from the foam of the sea.

“‘I am the PAST,’ said, or rather screamed, the eagle figure, and his eyes glistened, and his talons shot out from their covering, as if about to stoop and seize me. ‘I am the PAST; how hast thou used me?’

“‘I am the **PRESENT**,’ said the second figure, sternly. ‘Use me wisely, treat me kindly, and thou shalt have no need to fear the beak and talons of my brother. Look, the world is full of briars; take this axe, and hew thyself a way through them—the earth is stern and niggard; take this spade, and compel her bounty.’

“‘I am the **FUTURE**,’ said the third spirit, in a tone so sweet and musical, that, while I listened, all fear departed from me, and the heart within me kindled. ‘Follow me,’ continued the beautiful spirit, ‘and I will lead you to the Islands of the Blest; see, how calmly the waters glide; feel how softly the winds blow; follow me, poor creature of clay, and be happy.’

“And I did follow her—who could have resisted the fascination of that voice? Strange to say, the storm had passed off, and a warm summer moon was glowing upon the midnight waters. In the next moment, we were in her little skiff, with the light breeze filling our sails, and the sea sparkling about us. She stood at the bows chanting a melody of more

than mortal sweetness ; and, as the sound reached the waters, the dolphins gathered around us as of old at the music of Arion. I was unutterably happy ; the world with its cold realities was nothing now to me ; I thought not of it ; I thought not of them ; my whole soul was given up to the syren whose song, while it relaxed the muscles, filled my heart with an unknown pleasure.

“ Oh, that this voyage could have been ended but with life itself ! but in the midst of my languid enjoyment, the clouds gathered, the thunder rolled, the waves rose, and the winds burst from their caverns in the distant north. It was a fearful hurricane. At the first threat of the angry elements, the beautiful spirit spread her wings, and vanished with a lamentable cry. In the next moment I found myself struggling with the furious billows, which, rising mountains high, flung me on the point of a sharp rock, standing out like a solitary light-house in the middle of the pathless ocean. There I lay upon the crag, beaten by the winds and rain, and unable to move a limb. Then came a fearful rushing of winds, and the eagle-

spirit fell upon me with his cruel talons and struck his beak into my side. I was, as Prometheus of old, nailed to a rock, and condemned to be the everlasting prey of the bird of Jove. I could not die ; his thirst exhausted not the current in my veins ; his hunger still found a liver to feed upon.

“Night went, and the day came, but still it was the same—and again the stars rose, and still his claws were in my flesh, and his beak was at my heart. There was no respite—none—none—none. The moon grew old, and again young, as if she had renewed her youth in the magic kettle of the Colchian witch—yet still I writhed upon my rock. The summer solstice brought its scorching sun, the winter solstice came on the wings of the tempest, yet still I writhed upon my rock. Comets passed away and returned in their path of centuries—yet still I writhed upon my rock. The earth itself grew old, and brought forth shrubs instead of oaks ; the milk of her teeming bosom—the springs and rivers—that should have fed the green leaf and the fruit, had dried up—yet still I writhed upon my rock !

“At last the trumpet sounded to call the dead and the living before the throne of judgment. At the first summons the ocean shrunk back like a guilty thing, the planets stood still, and the affrighted earth was motionless. At the second, the grave yielded up its dead, and in the air was a sound of wailing and lamentation, and the shrieks of millions who dreaded to meet their last account. A third time the trumpet sounded, and—whirr, whirr, whirr—my old friend, the Dutchman, struck seven, and the Saracen squinted, as I thought, very significantly upon me. The trumpet was the horn of the early coach, which awoke me just in time to resume my journey, that had been delayed by the punch-bowl.

“Children, never forget ‘The Three Spirits.’”

SELF-SACRIFICE;
WITH
A SUPPLEMENT
ON
CELEBRATED POISONERS.

It was in the year 1676, that a merchant of Augsburg was on his travels in the way of business, when he met a Swiss merchant from the canton of *The Grey League*, who by repeated failures had been reduced to distress, and was now seeking to repair his fortunes by carrying on a little trade in Italy. But, perhaps it will be better to tell this tale as it was

received, that is, in the person of the Augsburg merchant.

We met as strangers, but the intercourse of business soon made us more familiar, and in a little time it was agreed that we should travel together, an arrangement which, while it suited his purse, provided me with an agreeable companion. The more I knew of him, the more cause I found to esteem him; or, if any thing occurred to disturb the harmony of our travel, it was his occasional fits of melancholy, when he thought of his wife and children, a feeling which might distress me as it clouded my own mirth, but which at the same time must of course exalt him in my opinion. In such moments of despondency it was my part to comfort him, and, when the first paroxysms of grief were over, I seldom failed in my attempts.

Week after week had thus passed, when one day we found ourselves entangled in a deep forest at the bottom of a hill that was grown about with oaks and firs, and were just going to seek our road in another direction, when we were met by an old man, who greeted us kindly,

though with visible astonishment at our presence. My companion, who was called Gotthart, went up to the stranger as if to address him ; but, if such was his purpose, the words died away upon his lips, and there he stood gazing, apparently rooted to the spot by wonder.

Old Man.—Why do you gaze on me so earnestly ?

Gotthart.—I have never before seen a hermit, and you, I think, are one.

Old Man.—(smiling.)—And who are you ?

Gotthart.—A merchant.

Old Man.—In what do you trade ?

Gotthart.—Any thing—every thing I possess—myself, if you will buy me.

Old Man.—Yourself!—you really will sell yourself ?

Gotthart.—If you can come up to my price ; but 'tis a heavy one, I promise you.

Old Man.—How much ?

Here my companion looked for a moment at me, and then, turning to the old man, said hastily, "Six thousand ducats."

"Well," replied the Old Man, "six thou-

sand ducats I will give you, but not a penny more."

"Agreed," said Gotthart.

"Not so fast," said the Old Man; "not so fast; take three days first to consider; then, if you still continue in the same mind, you will find me here again."

The Old Man now left us, and we returned in earnest conversation on this strange bargain, from which I boded no good, though my companion was obstinate in his purpose, and, indeed, the more we talked about it, the more resolved he seemed to get rid of his present misery at any cost. It was in vain I represented to him that the price went beyond the purchase, that he was probably exchanging the less evil for the greater; he continued immoveable in his purpose, and when he could no longer defend it by words against my arguments, he was silent. I was, therefore, compelled to drop the subject.

Thus passed three days, when Gotthart said to me, "Come, it is the time; I am going to sell myself to the Old Man, and relieve my wife and children from their misery. They

will at last be happy, and I shall have made them so."

The blood ran cold at my heart when I heard this speech. The idea was horrible enough when contemplated at a distance, but now—I can hardly explain what feelings it brought with it. Again I tried to dissuade him from his purpose, saying, "Think, my dear Gotthart, we are in a foreign land, where, in case of accident, there is none to protect us. Be wise before it is too late."—But he would not listen to me, and putting a brace of pistols into his pocket, replied, "With these I can always defend myself; besides, I am resolved to persist or get to the bottom of this mystery. How should the old hermit be possessed of so much gold?—but I'll soon know that."

"Perhaps more than that—more than you would wish to know."

"Not unlikely; but even the conviction of such a peril would not alter me. My wife and children must live; I cannot return a beggar to them."

"Better so than not return to them at all."

"Peace! my mind is made up, and it is not in the power of words to alter me. Come."

As I found he was not to be diverted from this mad project, I thought it best to accompany him to the place of tryste, and there, sure enough, we met the hermit, faithful to his hour. No sooner did he cast his eyes upon us than he exclaimed, with something like surprise, if not regret, "What! here again!—still in the same mind to sell yourself?"

"Yes," replied Gotthart, "if you can produce six thousand ducats."

The old man lifted up his hands to Heaven, and then again looked at Gotthart with eyes that seemed to be swimming in tears.

"What will you do with this gold?" he said at length. "When you are mine, it cannot profit you, for your life will be wholly in my hands, to kill or save, as I may deem best, and I shall not expect to have laid out my money in vain."

At these words I shuddered, and the very power of speech, or even thought, seemed to leave me; but Gotthart boldly replied, "The gold is for my wife and starving children; give

me then the six thousand ducats, and do with me as you will."

The old man paused in silence for a few moments, as if still reluctant to seal the bargain, when he said, "Be it so; will you have the money in gold, or in bills of exchange, that it may be more easily conveyed to your family?—And yet, no; take first another three days to consider, before you renounce all your earthly happiness; 'tis a little time for such a choice. If at the end of that period you still persist in your resolve, then come again to me—on this very spot—and you shall receive bills of exchange payable to your wife in the Grey League."

Again the old man left us, and again I tried to dissuade my fellow-traveller from entering into such a compact; but he was immovable, and the hermit's visible reluctance to the bargain—the very thing which caused me most alarm—was with him an additional reason for wishing its completion. If he was resolved before, he was now doubly so; he thought that all these doubtful speeches of the hermit were no more than so many trials of his courage,

and the six thousand ducats were the least of his expectations. Nor could I help confessing that what he said was not altogether unreasonable; the thing was not without a precedent; and yet there was a mystic terror hanging over my mind that I was unable to shake off by any force of argument.

The second three days were run out, when Gotthart called on me, as he had done before, to accompany him to the hermit; and there again was the Old Man, on the same spot, but his manner was colder and briefer than it had been in the previous interview. He fixed his staff in the earth, drew a paper from his bosom, and said, "Will this do?"—It was a bill of exchange; I took it with a trembling hand, and oh! how eagerly did I examine it in the hope of finding some flaw, however slight—some deficient form—some doubtful name—any thing as a pretext for breaking off this fearful bargain; but, no; the bill was only too good; the securities were undeniable.

"Will it do?" repeated the hermit after the lapse of several minutes, for I was still trying to draw out the time—"will it do?"—

The thought instantly struck me to impeach the validity of the bill; but the old man seemed to read my thoughts, for he quickly added, "or will you have gold, as I first proposed?" There was no parrying this; farther denial was in vain; I therefore, acknowledged the bill to be a good one, and my friend, embracing me, said, "Convey it then to my wife and children, but not a word of this condition, if it should prove fatal to me—you understand; it is for my good wife and my dear children."

With this we parted, I to my lodgings in the town, and Gotthart with the Old Man deeper into the wood, though I knew not whither. My first care was to send off the bill of exchange, according to my friend's desire, but no sooner was it done than I reproached myself for having sent to a wife the price of her husband's blood. But how was I to help him? I was alone, in a foreign land; if I told my tale, who would believe me? Besides, was it not probable that the old man was powerfully protected? Perhaps, too, there was no danger after all; it might be nothing more than what Gotthart had imagined; and

that thought kept me quiet for a few hours. I looked out of the window, and thought to myself, he will return ere long. But the day passed, and he did not return—a second day, the same—a third—a fourth—a fifth—up to the eighth morning, when I could bear the suspense no longer, and hurried out to seek the old man in his forest. There was no difficulty in finding him; but how did I find him?—on his knees—in prayer. I threw myself beside him, and for a few minutes our voices ascended in unison to our Maker. Then the hermit arose, and, looking at me compassionately, exclaimed, “Alas! what brings you hither?”

“My friend! my friend!” I cried, “I conjure you by all that is most holy!—by those grey hairs!—by the few years that yet remain to you of life!—by the God to whom you have just been praying!—shew me my friend—let me know his fate!”

“What would you have?” said the hermit; “is he not mine? is not his price paid, his blood satisfied? But be it as you wish; come, see your friend.”

He took me by the hand, and led me through the grotto to a lofty door of iron in the rock. Thrice he knocked at distinct intervals; and at the third blow the door opened from within, and discovered to me a sight more dreadful than the worst of my expectations. Twelve men sate there, fastened to huge logs of wood, before a large fire, mixing the poison of snakes, and herbs, and minerals, and boiling them together in a brass caldron, that sent up a stench enough to suffocate any one not used to this horrid avocation. The men themselves looked like so many spectres, with their emaciated limbs, and pale distorted faces. I was rooted to the spot, but the hermit said, "Stay not here; come on with me, and prepare yourself for a sight of greater horror." With this, he opened a second door, and led me into a gloomy cavern, where my eyes were blasted by a scene that almost mocks description. I saw human beings in a state of maddening torture, hung up by the nerves, each with a reed at his mouth, through which he spurted the foam that worked in frenzy from his lips. There, too, was my friend, but, oh! how altered!

death could not have wrought a change of half such terror—he was at the last gasp, and died, exclaiming, “Oh, my dear wife! my dear children!” At this sight I wept aloud, execrating the cruelty of the old man, who could do such deeds, and yet pray for mercy to his Creator. But neither my tears nor reproaches moved him; he only calmly replied, “Be wise and silent, for such is the will of those who rule this land. Here is the workshop of Death, and here he prepares arms for himself more certain than the dagger or the bullet. A subtle powder makes our victims mad, and from their foam arises the dreadful essence of our most fatal poisons. But now begone, and let your lips be sealed in everlasting silence as to that which you have this day heard and seen, or—but I need not threaten; this sight has done its office.”

This tale, however monstrous it may seem, by no means exceeds the usual barbarity of the times in which it is supposed to have taken place. That a poison was prepared from the

foam of men, driven to madness, is an old and well-known story; it is even said that the celebrated *Aqua Toffana* was made in this way, and that human beings were purposely urged into frenzy by scourging, and racking, and the most cruel modes of torture. This poison took its name from a certain woman, called *Toffana*, or *Toffania*, who lived by turns at Naples and Palermo, and sold it at a high price, as she might well do, when six drops only were sufficient to kill a man; by thinning it, the effect might be prolonged to a less or greater period, at the option of him who administered the dose, thus affording an additional security to the crime. So generous, too, was her malignity, that she would even give doses of it to poor wives, who wanted to get rid of their husbands, but could not afford the luxury of murder. At last, however, the government took notice of her practices and would have punished her, upon which she fled from cloister to cloister, where, of course, she found a temporary protection. In the end the vigilance of justice was too quick for her, and when Keyssler was at Naples in the year

1730, she was still living, though in prison. Here she was visited by the curious, who saw in her only a little withered old woman, whose life, though justly forfeited to the law, was yet not worth the taking; she was, however, finally executed by order of the Viceroy, General Thaun, who had seized her in the first instance without paying the least regard to the abused right of sanctuary.

In the year 1666, a still more general system of poisoning prevailed in Rome, and that too at a time when the pest was raging in all its fury. This abominable practice was more particularly resorted to by women who happened to be weary of their husbands, and even those of the highest ranks were as much given to the poisoning fashion as the lowest. The family confessors were the first to get a clue to this murderous system; some amongst them were wise enough and honest enough not to regard the sanctity of the confessional, and betrayed as much as they knew of the business to Pope Alexander the Seventh, who immediately ordered the Governor of Rome to use every possible exertion to bring the of-

fenders to justice. This, however, was not an easy task, for as yet they had no certain grounds to go upon, the penitents not knowing, or not choosing to reveal, from whom they had the poisons.

The Governor was now on the watch, and in a short time his suspicions were excited by the sudden death of two manufacturers, who had married two sisters, Erminia and Armallina, the daughters of an old weaver; the one died after a violent fit of vomiting, and in eight days afterwards the other husband suddenly followed him. The attention of the police was instantly, but quietly, directed towards the house of the mother, and it was not long before they observed that she was frequently visited by an old woman, a sort of devotee, who, on farther enquiry, proved to be the servant of a certain Sicilian, Hieronyma Spara, well-known amongst the people under the name of the Prophetess, from her trade of fortune-telling. This was enough for suspicion, but not for proof, and the police had now recourse to the simple stratagem of dressing up a female agent in the habit of a fashionable

lady as a decoy-duck for Hieronyma. First, the pretended Baroness sent to consult her on the loss of a ring; then she visited her in person, at her own house, where she found a certain huckster, called Graziosa, who was also a prophetess. This circumstance augmented the Governor's suspicion; the Baroness redoubled her assiduities, and, by her liberality and the apparent frankness of her communications, gradually won on the confidence of the cautious Spara. Then she began to speak more openly, and to complain of her husband, but as this is far from being an unusual topic amongst married women, and as, besides, it was skilfully and naturally introduced, the old woman very readily fell into the snare and joined in the stranger's lamentations. On her part, the Baroness seemed highly delighted with this reciprocity of sentiment, and, moved to it by tears, exclaimed, "Ah, who could help me out of this dilemma! I would give this costly diamond ring,—nay, twice its value—to any one who would show me the way to be freed from such a torment." The Prophetess was caught at once by this tempting bait, and

made no difficulty in exchanging a flask of poison for the ring, after it had been first tried on a dog and proved to be effective.

The police had now what they wanted ; all the women just mentioned were seized upon, before they could have the least suspicion of such a design, with the exception only of Graziosa, who escaped for the time ; she was, however, incautious enough, or impudent enough, to return to Rome a few days afterwards, and, being recognized by one of the Sbirri, he went up to her and said, "Is not your name Dorothea?" On the spur of the moment she hastily answered,— "No ; I am called Graziosa." — "Excellent !" replied the Sbirro ; "you are the very woman we want." And with this he took her off to prison.

The examination was conducted with the utmost rigour, and, as Spara persisted in an obstinate denial, she was adjudged to the rack, without which she never would have confessed. When she found that the business was taking this serious turn, she burst into a flood of tears, exclaiming, "How ! am I to be stretched on the rack ? where then are my employers,

the princes and barons, who assured me of their powerful protection? where are the ladies of rank, who were so attached to me, who called themselves my children? Alas! can they do nothing for their mother?"

That they did not will be readily believed; the rack was before her; it was certain; and she was glad to make a full confession, though it condemned to death both herself and her companions. The execution took place in the Campo di Fiori, amidst an immense concourse of the people; even the windows were thronged, at the rate of twenty ducats for a place. A trumpeter preceded the culprits, crying out with a loud voice the nature of the crime for which they were to suffer, and they were then hanged on a lofty gallows erected there for the purpose. But neither the crime nor the punishment ceased with the first offenders; a few months subsequently, five other women were condemned to death for similar offences, and the records of their trials were sent to the archives of Eaglesburg, at the express command of the Pope, that this infernal art might be hidden from the general knowledge of the

people. It does not, however, appear that the Pope was successful in his attempt to keep it secret, for in the *Jenaische Literatur Zeitung* (Jena Literary Journal), for the year 1799, Number 142, p. 316, the reviewer says, "The Aqua Toffana is not prepared in Naples, but, according to our informers on the subject, at Perugia, in the States of the Church, and there only by one particular family; the preparation of it is still a mystery." Perhaps, then, the secret has been traditionally preserved; at all events there seems to be no reason to doubt the existence of such an art, for in London, only a few years ago, there was an eminent physician, who possessed this fatal mystery, or who at least had the knowledge of a poison precisely similar in its effects; a single drop of it occasions instant death, and such was the power of the Aqua Toffana.

This poison was also very generally known under the appellation of *Manna of St. Nicholas*, and from the following circumstance.—There was a celebrated balsam so called, which was vended in bottles of a peculiar conformation, and labelled accordingly. To hide the

real nature of the Aqua Toffana from the curious, it was at times transmitted to the purchaser in these bottles, and hence, having passed for the *Manna* of St. Nicholas, in the end obtained that name as a soubriquet.

In France, in the year 1670, a certain Marchioness Brinvilliers became no less famous, or rather infamous, than the Italian Toffana; indeed she was worse—if in such crimes there can be any gradations of guilt,—for her art was chiefly directed against her own relations, and from her rank in life she could not plead in excuse the temptations that usually beset the low and indigent. In this abominable practice she was assisted by her lover, St. Croix; but both at last fell into the hands of justice, and met with a fate proportioned to their cruelty. He was broken alive on the wheel, in the year 1672; she was beheaded, and afterwards burnt in the year 1676. But even such examples, though sufficiently terrible, were not enough to put a stop to the overwhelming progress of this crime, and in 1679, a court was opened for the express purpose of proceeding against poisoners; it was

called *Chambre de Poison*, or *Chambre Ardente*; the latter name was by no means inappropriate, for its decisions were too often stained by ignorance and cruelty, or abused to the purposes of individual vengeance. A reference to the *Causes Celebres et Interessantes* will fully justify us in our horror of this sanguinary tribunal.

THE END.

J. BENSLEY, PRINTER, WOKING.

